



NICK CARTER WEEKLY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 279.

Price. Five Cents.

NICK CARTER AND THE KIDNAPPED HEIRESS

OR
THE RECOVERY OF A GREAT RANSOM



THE AUTHOR OF NICK CARTER

PATSY WAS SEIZED VIOLENTLY FROM BEHIND.



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Price Five Cents.

Nick Carter and the Kidnapped Heiress;

OR,

THE RECOVERY OF A GREAT RANSOM.

By the author of "NICHOLAS CARTER."

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CHAPTER I.

A DOUBTFUL CLIENT.

"Mr. Carter, can I trust you?"

It was in the great detective's own house that this question was asked.

"Well," was Nick's quiet answer, "if you had any doubt on that matter, why did you come to me?"

His caller looked nervously at the floor.

"There's no use in talking to me," Nick went on, "unless you do trust me. A detective can do nothing for a client who does not give him his confidence absolutely."

"Of course," the other assented; "I did not mean to offend you."

"You haven't offended me."

"I am so disturbed by it, you see. So much depends on secrecy. It is so terribly important that I found it difficult to make up my mind to consult anybody on the matter; and yet I know by your repu-

tation that you are a perfectly trustworthy man. There is nobody in the States more so."

While the man was speaking Nick was studying him.

In fact, the detective had been doing that from the moment the man entered.

He was apparently about fifty years old; a well-dressed, prosperous-looking man, who might be a merchant, or a lawyer, or a banker.

Nick did no guessing. The man might be anything else. He had given his name as George Snell, but he had not sent in his card, and he had not said where he belonged.

Word had simply been taken to Nick by a servant that a Mr. George Snell wanted to see him on "most important business."

"He isn't an American," was Nick's only conclusion from what had been said thus far. "An Ameri-

can would not have spoken simply of 'the States,' as he did."

There had been a pause after the caller's last remarks.

"Well," he exclaimed then, "I'm not coming more than two-thirds of the way across the continent for nothing. I set out to consult you, and I will do so."

"That's better," said the detective; and, willing to help him tell his story, he asked: "What kind of a case is it, Mr. Snell?"

"I suppose you'd call it kidnaping; but there's robbery combined with it, and—and also—also blackmail."

Mr. Snell hesitated and stammered a little at the end of this speech.

Nick merely nodded.

"To begin with," continued Mr. Snell, "I come from Wenonah. You may not be aware that the Government of England has made a large section of Western British America into a province and called it Wenonah."

"Yes," said Nick, "I am aware of that."

"You are a well-informed man. Few Americans would know the fact, for the province is so young that it isn't down on the maps yet. You know, also, I suppose, that the capital of the province is a town called Manchester?"

"Yes."

"That is where the crime was committed. It happened a month ago. The governor of the province, Bradley is his name, gave a party at his house. All the prominent families of the town and country around attended. There was dancing till a late hour.

"Then, when the guests were going away, it was discovered that the governor's daughter, Estelle, was missing. She has not been seen since."

"How old is the child?" asked Nick.

"Child?" echoed Mr. Snell, in apparent astonishment. Then he seemed to understand and added: "It is natural that you should use that word, but the girl is twenty."

"Oh!"

"She's the governor's only daughter, and heiress, therefore, to his property, which is very great."

"Has nothing been heard from her?"

"Indirectly, yes. Her captors have offered to restore her for a ransom."

"Has there been any attempt to deal with her captors?"

"Yes, but nothing has come of it. There is doubt now whether she is really in the hands of kidnapers."

"Ah! what then?"

"I haven't told you the whole story, Mr. Carter."

"Go on, then."

"The day after she disappeared it was found that a considerable amount of jewelry had gone also."

"Did she wear it at the ball?"

"Some of it, most of it, in fact. But that was not all. There were also missing certain state papers and some private documents belonging to the governor. These are extremely important. They must be recovered at any cost."

"Are they more important than the recovery of Miss Bradley, Mr. Snell?"

"No, I wouldn't say that, but they complicate the case badly. An offer has been made to restore them."

"And the girl?"

"No. That is, there was one offer to restore the girl and another to deal for the return of the papers and jewelry. There seems to be a double gang of villains at work."

"Possibly. What about the blackmail you mentioned?"

"That," answered Mr. Snell, hesitating, "has to do with the stolen papers."

"Something shady in the governor's past?"

Mr. Snell looked at the floor.

"I wouldn't like to say," he replied. "Some people might think so."

"Evidently the robbers do think so, eh?"

"Yes, for they put a big price on the papers."

"I suppose the matter has been investigated by the police of Manchester."

"No."

"Then how did you communicate with the robbers?"

"I didn't say that I had communicated with the robbers!" exclaimed Mr. Snell, hastily.

"No, but I supposed it was you. Never mind that for a moment. Tell me more about the disappearance of Miss Bradley."

"There isn't much that I can tell. She must have left the house soon after midnight, but she wasn't missed till three hours or more later."

"Was she engaged to be married?"

Snell looked sharply at the detective.

"You're a keen one," he said. "No, she wasn't engaged, and that is another complication."

"How?"

"Well, it is known that she was in love with a young fellow who wasn't liked by her father. Naturally he wasn't at the ball. It is thought possible that she eloped with him, and that the offer of the robbers to restore her was a bluff."

"Was her lover a rich man?"

"Decidedly not."

"Then you think she may have taken the jewelry to sell for her own use."

"It's possible, yes. I've thought of it."

"And that the robbery of the papers simply happened to come at the same time."

"That might be."

"Has Miss Bradley's lover been seen since she disappeared?"

"Yes."

"What does he say?"

"Nothing."

"Indeed! I should suppose he would say a good deal."

"He goes about his business as usual, but he is under constant watch. It's plain enough that there is something on his mind."

"I should think there might be, in any case. What is his name?"

"Cecil West."

"And what is your relation to the affair, Mr. Snell?"

The visitor seemed startled.

"My relation to it?" he echoed.

"Certainly. Do you come here as the representative of Governor Bradley?"

"Oh, no! not at all! the governor didn't send me."

"Who did, then?"

Snell looked uncomfortable.

"Do you need an answer to that?" he asked.

"Of course I do. I must know whom I am dealing with."

"But I gave my name——"

"It is not enough."

The detective spoke rather sharply.

Mr. Snell hesitated and then said:

"Mr. Carter, I cannot see why I should be dragged into the matter at all——"

"But," interrupted Dick, coldly, "nobody has dragged you that I am aware of. I certainly didn't."

"You are trying to do so now, Mr. Carter."

Nick arose.

"There is no need that we should talk longer," he said.

Snell also stood up, and he looked very much troubled.

"I see that I have offended you," he said. "I didn't mean to. You see, Mr. Carter, a great scandal might come of this. It is very important that there should be none. The governor's position might be lost——"

"At this moment," said Nick, "I care nothing for the governor's position. You have given me some facts in a case that might be interesting, but I don't propose to tackle it unless I know what I am about."

"We want you to look for the girl and the stolen papers."

"Who are *we*?"

Snell hung his head.

"Excuse me a moment," said Nick, then; "I think I heard the telephone ring. When I return I hope you will have made up your mind to trust me. If you haven't we can't do business."

He bowed and left the room, but he did not go to the telephone.

Instead he went to a room where Patsy was reading and gave him a few rapid instructions.

Then he wrote a telegram and sent it to the nearest office by a servant.

Patsy got his hat and went downstairs.

"Now, Mr. Snell," said Nick, when he returned, "are you ready to tell me what I want to know?"

"I can only say that I want you to act in behalf of the governor."

"Does he know that you came to New York to ask this?"

Snell did not answer.

"We are wasting each other's time," said Nick.

Snell made a last appeal.

"I may be doing wrong," he said, "but I beg you to look into this matter. You can't help seeing how important it is."

"Well," replied Nick, "usually I have nothing to do with a case where any facts are concealed from me——"

"I am concealing no facts."

"Pardon me, you refuse to answer one of the first

questions a detective would ask. I was going to say, Mr. Snell, give me a few hours to think it over and come again. Will you call to-morrow morning?"

"I will."

"Very well, till then."

The detective went with his visitor to the door.

Mr. Snell said "good-evening," politely, and started down the street.

A short distance behind him went Patsy.

CHAPTER II.

PLENTY OF TROUBLE FOR MR. SELL.

Nick had not taken time to tell Patsy very much about Snell.

"There's something up," he said to his assistant. "I have no idea what it is, but I want you to shadow this man and see what becomes of him."

"Think he's a crook?" asked the young man.

"Not yet. He may be. If so, it won't be the first time that a crook has tried to throw me off the track by calling on me. I simply feel that there's something queer in this, and I'd rather like to find out about it. So I shall ask this man to call again unless he makes up his mind to tell me all the facts."

Snell, as we have seen, refused to tell all the facts, and so Patsy slipped out after him.

He had not gone far from the house when the young detective became convinced that another man also was following Snell.

This made his work very difficult, for he had to look sharp against betraying himself not only to Snell, but the other man.

Snell went into a drug store and bought a cigar.

The man who seemed to be following him loafed on the opposite corner.

Patsy turned down a street, and dropped into a doorway, where he made a swift change in his appearance.

He was at Snell's heels again when the man from Wenonah went on.

The other man seemed to have disappeared.

"I was mistaken," thought Patsy, "or the second chap is a better shadow than I am."

For some blocks he kept up his chase, never losing sight of Snell, and seeing nothing more of the other.

Meantime Snell was apparently wandering around aimlessly.

He would stop at a corner and wait a full minute before he made up his mind which way to go.

Often he changed his direction.

In this way he got into a neighborhood which was very quiet in the evening.

Part way down a block he stopped suddenly, stood still for a moment and then went close to a building.

He was then in such deep shadow that Patsy could not see him.

"Somebody spoke to him," reasoned the detective.

He went cautiously closer, and before he could see anybody he heard the sounds of voices in conversation.

What they said it was impossible to make out.

The detective dared not get close enough for that for fear of attracting the attention of the men.

There seemed to be two of them.

Presently he heard one voice say:

"I won't do it."

One of the men started away.

"It will be the worse for you, then," growled the other.

The first man hastened his steps.

As he came from the shadow, Patsy saw that it was Snell.

The other man was darting after him on tiptoe.

He had one arm drawn back.

"Great Scott!" thought Patsy, "he means murder!"

He gave up trying to conceal his actions then.

Running forward as fast as possible, he shouted: "Look out!"

Snell turned quickly.

The other man was close to him, and let his hand fall.

With a great leap Patsy was up to him just in time to catch his arm.

But it was too late to stop the blow entirely.

A slung-shot in the man's hand slipped from it and struck Snell a glancing blow on the head.

"Ah!" he cried, and staggered.

Patsy dashed to assist him, and caught hold of him in time to prevent him from falling against an iron fence, which probably would have broken his head.

The would-be murderer was dashing down the street.

Patsy could not be in two places at once.

He wanted to chase the unknown criminal, but his first business was with Snell.

This was not only because Nick had sent him out to shadow Snell, but because the man seemed to be badly injured.

He was groaning and trembling so that he would have fallen if the detective had not held him up.

"Better sit down a minute," Patsy suggested, "and let me see if there's anything serious the matter."

Snell sank to a doorstep, and Patsy made a quick examination of his head.

"That was a nasty blow," he said, "but I think your skull is sound. Aren't you feeling better?"

"Yes," Snell replied, "I am. I was more frightened than hurt, perhaps. I am greatly obliged to you."

"Don't mention it. Let me help you to your house. Do you live near?"

Snell laughed a little.

"Near!" he repeated, "I should say not."

"Will you have a cab called to take you home?" asked Patsy.

Again Snell laughed.

"It would be too long a journey," he said. "I am a stranger in New York, and I am staying at the Fifth Avenue. That isn't very far away, I believe."

"No, and you can get a car at the next block, if you want to."

"I'd rather walk."

He got up, and Patsy held his arm till they came to the corner.

"I don't suppose your friend will tackle you again," said the detective, then; "but I haven't anything to do, and if you like I'll walk with you to the hotel."

"You are very kind," Snell responded; "suppose you do. I confess that I am very nervous."

"He had it in for you, I suppose," remarked Patsy.

"Yes."

"Don't you want to speak to this policeman about it?"

An officer was approaching.

"No! no!" exclaimed Snell, hastily; "I have my reasons for keeping the matter quiet. Don't for Heaven's sake, say a word."

"All right. It's no business of mine, but if any

fellow had thumped me like that I should want him put where he couldn't try it again."

"I don't think he will try it again; at least, not in New York. I'd rather not talk about it."

"Just as you say, sir. Want to stop in at a drug store and get your head bathed with arnica?"

"That would be a good idea."

They entered the next drug store they came to, where it proved that Snell had suffered nothing more than a painful bruise.

After that they went on to the Fifth Avenue Hotel.

"I am very much obliged to you," said Snell, halting in the doorway.

"Don't mention it," Patsy responded.

"Will you come in and have something?"

He looked as if he hoped Patsy would say no, but the detective was glad of any excuse to stick to him.

"Yes," said Patsy, "don't care if I do."

Snell nodded silently, and led the way into the hotel.

As they were passing the desk the clerk spoke to him.

"Mr. Snell," he said, "there's a telegram here for you."

"Excuse me," said Snell to Patsy, going quickly to the desk.

He took the envelope handed to him, and opened it with trembling fingers.

When he had read the message he crumpled the paper in his hand and frowned.

After a moment of thought, he turned to Patsy, said, "Excuse me" again, and went with him to the barroom.

Patsy asked for a glass of beer, but Snell poured himself a stiff drink of whisky.

"Once more," he said, raising his glass, "I thank you for coming to my rescue. Honestly I believe I should be a dead man this minute if you hadn't. Here's your health."

"How," responded Patsy, and they drank.

"Now," continued Snell, "I don't like to leave a man who has saved my life in this abrupt way, but I've got to. This telegram calls me out of town, and I must lose no time in getting ready. Won't you leave me your name and address?"

"Why," answered Patsy, "I'll give you my name if you want it, and address, too, but it isn't likely

that we shall meet again if you don't live in New York. My name is James Callahan," and he gave an address that the detectives sometimes used.

It was a place where any letters that came to strange names were promptly taken to Nick's house.

Snell made a note of the address.

"My name is Snell," he said, "and I hope we shall meet again, Mr. Callahan. I must say good-by now."

They shook hands and Snell went to the elevator.

"I wish he had dropped that telegram," thought the detective.

He looked at the clock. It was an hour and a half to midnight. If Snell meant to leave town at once he could hardly hope to do so until midnight, for that was the hour at which through trains started from most stations.

There was time to make a report to Nick and get back again if that should be necessary.

Accordingly Patsy hurried to Nick's house, and told his chief what had happened.

Nick looked very thoughtful.

"I had about decided that the man is crazy," he said. "I sent a telegram to the chief of police at Manchester, asking if he knew of any robbery of jewels, state papers, or anything else of great importance within a month. I also asked if there had been a mysterious disappearance within the same time, and if he knew who George Snell was. Here's his answer, received five minutes ago."

He handed a telegram to Patsy.

It read:

Nothing doing in crime here. Never heard of George Snell. No man of that name lives here.

(Signed.)

DINSMORE.

"Dinsmore," said Nick, "is the chief at Manchester now. He used to be on the New York force, and I know him well. Now, if there has been a serious crime at Manchester, two thousand miles away, isn't it strange that I should hear of it in New York before it is known there?"

"It beats me," said Patsy.

"And it looks as if Snell was the chief crook in the matter," added Nick. "But, if he is, I can't see what he's driving at. After getting this telegram I thought he was crazy, that he imagined a crime had been committed, and I didn't mean to have anything more to do with the matter."

"Now I am interested. What you have told me shows that there's something up, something very mysterious.

"I think we'd better keep our eyes on it, Patsy."

"Well?"

"Go back to the hotel and get on Snell's track. Follow him across the continent if necessary, and keep me posted."

"All right, boss."

"Better take a cab. Leave your grip in it until you know what station Snell is going to. Then stick to him like a burr. There may be more attempts against his life."

Patsy was gone in a minute.

When his cab halted at the Fifth Avenue he did not leave it, for he saw Snell coming out.

The man got into a hotel carriage, and told the driver to take him to the Pennsylvania Railroad station.

This was done, and, of course, Patsy followed.

Snell bought a ticket for Chicago, and Patsy, who stood close behind him at the window, did the same.

They were almost side by side as they went to the ferryboat, Patsy, of course, so disguised that Snell did not recognize him.

Snell went to the forward end of the boat and stood near the rail.

The detective sat down in the men's cabin.

Hardly had he taken his seat when a man came aboard whom he had seen before.

It was the one whom he had suspected as shadowing Snell from Nick Carter's house.

CHAPTER III.

A GAME OF WATCHING.

Patsy thought that this was the same man who had come so near killing Snell.

He had not been sure of that at the time, for he had not been able to see the would-be murderer's face.

Now it took only a sharp glance to satisfy him, for the man's motions were a little peculiar.

He had a way of bending his head to one side which Patsy had noticed in the man who had shadowed Snell.

As he remembered it the same sideways hang of the head had been the case with the would-be mur-

derer in that instant when he saw him darting after his victim.

"So," thought Patsy, "he's at his game again. Been watching Snell, probably, ever since the attack. There'll be trouble if he finds his man on board."

Nothing could have been plainer than that the man was looking for somebody.

He went part way through the cabin, giving stealthy, side glances at the men on the seats.

When he came to the stairway that led to the upper deck he went up.

"He won't find Snell up there, I think," said Patsy to himself, as he got up and went forward.

The detective went as far as the door that opened upon the forward deck.

Looking through it, he saw Snell leaning against the rail.

Nobody else was out there.

At that moment the boat had hardly got beyond the end of the ferry slip.

Patsy sat down where he could look the length of the men's cabin and also glance through the glass in the door at the forward deck.

In less than a minute he saw the stranger coming down the stairs from the upper cabin.

He was still walking slowly, and peering sharply at the passengers.

When he had come as far as the door, he halted and looked through the glass.

The detective could see his face.

He saw the man's brow wrinkle first when he perceived that somebody was standing alone by the rail.

Then his lips were pressed hard together, and he nodded as if satisfied.

Evidently he had recognized Snell.

For a moment longer he stood there, hesitating, perhaps.

Then he gave a side glance at Patsy, who sat so close that they almost touched each other.

The detective seemed to be deeply engaged in reading a placard hung on the opposite wall.

The man softly opened the door and went out.

Patsy was on his feet instantly.

Looking through the glass, he saw the stranger slink into the darkness by the sidewall of the boat, there being a space thus shut in between the cabin door and the open deck where Snell stood looking at the water.

"What a chance," thought Patsy, "to sneak up and pitch his man overboard!"

The stranger stood motionless a moment.

Then he edged forward.

At that Patsy quietly opened the door and stepped out.

The man did not hear him.

His attention was too much taken with what he was going to do.

Snell was motionless.

The boat was about in midstream.

Patsy's muscles quivered as the stranger glided swiftly up and placed his hand on Snell's shoulder.

Snell whirled around, with a gasp of surprise and alarm.

He put up his hands to push the man away, and tried to back from the rail.

The stranger kept his hand firmly on Snell's shoulder.

For a second or two the men jostled each other, but it could not be said that they were struggling.

The stranger seemed merely trying to hold Snell still.

Patsy heard him say:

"Keep quiet! I am not going to hurt you!"

Evidently Snell was somewhat relieved at this, but he was still frightened.

"I've a good mind to have you arrested," he said.

The other laughed.

"You'll think better of that as soon as you see a policeman," he retorted.

"You've tried to kill me once to-night," said Snell.

"Well, let that pass. I didn't succeed, and now that you're starting West I shan't try again."

"What do you want of me now?"

"I want to talk with you."

"On the same subject?"

"The same."

Snell gave a hasty glance at the river.

"Think of jumping in?" sneered the stranger.

"No," replied Snell, with a shudder.

Then he looked back toward the cabin, and saw Patsy.

Seeing that he was perceived, the detective walked easily forward and stood looking at the lights of Jersey City.

"This is no place," said Snell, in a low tone.

"Of course not. I'll go on the train with you."

Snell started uncomfortably.

"I presume," the other went on, with a harsh chuckle, "that you engaged a stateroom on the sleeper, and thought that you would lock yourself in and so be safe for the night. Fortunately, there's room for two in a stateroom."

At this, Snell said nothing, but went back to the cabin.

The other followed, and both went inside.

"Well!" thought Patsy, "this is a puzzler, and no mistake. Are they both crooks? and have they had a falling out?"

"One is certainly a would-be murderer, and Snell is plainly in great fear of him.

"I should think he would be.

"I wonder if they will actually occupy the same room on the train?"

They did.

Snell, as the stranger had said, had engaged a stateroom, and both went into it immediately on going aboard the train.

Patsy secured a berth in the same car, and, as he turned in he wondered whether one man or two would come out of that stateroom in the morning.

It seemed to him most likely that the stranger would make an attempt to murder Snell during the night.

"If it were my business to take care of Snell," thought the detective, "I'd invent some way to do it; but it isn't, and I'll just wait and see what happens."

With that thought he went to sleep.

In the morning he touched the button beside his berth before getting up.

When the porter came he asked:

"Is there a dining car on the train, Charley?"

"Yessah," replied the porter. "Breakfast will be ready in twenty minutes, sah."

"All right; then I'll get up."

"Sumfin else yo' want, sah?"

"Yes. Put your head in here, Charley."

The porter put his head in between the curtains.

"Have the gentlemen in the stateroom turned out yet?" asked Patsy.

"No, sah; ain't seed nuffin' of 'em."

"Were they quiet all night?"

"Yassah. Leastwise, I didn't hear nuffin."

"All right."

"Friends of yours, sah?"

"Not exactly, but I'm curious about them, that's all. You needn't say I asked any questions."

"No, sah—thank yo' berry much, sah. Won't say a word."

The porter had received handsome pay for his silence, and Patsy knew he could be trusted.

He dressed and went forward to the dining-car.

As he passed Snell's stateroom, he listened for the sound of voices, but none came.

The detective wondered if there was one man in that room who couldn't speak.

Having plenty of time to kill, he spent an hour at the breakfast table.

Before he was ready to go, in came Snell and the stranger.

They sat at the same table and appeared to be in good spirits, at least the stranger was.

Snell looked rather haggard, but he talked with his companion, and without any apparent fear of him.

"Strange!" thought Patsy; "but I'm glad my man is still alive. I want to find out what it all means."

He went to the smoker, and after he had been there a half-hour or so, Snell and the stranger came in also.

They did not talk much as they smoked their cigars, but no one would have guessed that one had tried to kill the other less than twelve hours before.

So it was all the way to Chicago.

The two men were together all the time, and there was hardly a minute that the detective did not have them in view.

It was early morning when the train arrived in Chicago.

Snell and his companion got into a cab, and Patsy heard them tell the driver to go to the Northwestern station.

Patsy arrived at the station at the same moment they did.

They breakfasted in the station restaurant, and after a time they went to the ticket window.

Snell bought a ticket for Helena, Montana.

The stranger did not buy any.

This also seemed somewhat strange, and the detective was a little disappointed.

He had hoped to keep them together.

But he bought a ticket for Helena, and in due time was again on the same train with Snell.

The stranger stayed at the station until the train

left, and Patsy saw him on the platform as it rolled out.

Nothing of importance happened on the rest of the way to Helena.

Once the detective tried to scrape acquaintance with Snell, but the latter answered him in a surly way, and made it plain that he did not care to talk to anybody.

So Patsy gave it up for fear of making him suspicious.

Meantime, he had telegraphed Nick as to where he was going.

When they arrived in Helena, Snell did not go to a first-rate hotel, as he had done in New York, but walked about the streets, as if looking for some place that he had been sent to.

It was pretty clear that he was a stranger in the city.

At last he turned into a small building, on which there was a rough sign, with these words:

BRONCO BILL'S HOUSE.

The place was hardly larger than an ordinary saloon, and liquor selling certainly was its principal business.

Patsy went in a moment after Snell.

He found himself in a cheap barroom, where a few men were loafing.

Snell was at one end of the bar, talking in a low voice with one who seemed to be the proprietor.

The detective took his place at the other end of the bar and called for a drink.

A moment later, Snell and the proprietor went out by a door at the back, and he heard their steps going up a flight of stairs.

They were gone but a minute, and when they returned, Snell was saying:

"It may be only two or three days, you know, and I can get along all right. I'll pay for the room for a week, anyway."

With this, he took bills from his pocket, and gave money to the proprietor, who responded:

"O k, then, the place is yours."

Then the landlord invited Snell to have a drink, and Snell accepted the invitation.

"Well," thought Patsy, "I shall have to find another place to stay. Bronco Bill evidently isn't used to having guests in real hotel fashion, and two at a time would make him and everybody else suspicious.

"I couldn't put up any sort of a yarn that would satisfy them. So I'll get a room somewhere else, and then drop in here when I feel like it.

"That will be safe enough, for it looks sure that Snell is bound to stay for a while."

As the detective left the saloon, he saw a sign in the window of a house opposite:

ROOMS TO LET.

"That will do," he decided, "but not just yet."

He was fearful that Snell might be watching him, for he could not tell how suspicious that strange man might be.

So he walked around town a little while, made a complete change in his disguise, and finally returned to the lodging-house opposite Bronco Bill's.

There he hired a room that had a window opening on the street, at which he sat for some time, with his face hidden behind the curtain.

He saw enough to know that Snell was still at the "hotel," and he was satisfied.

Late in the afternoon, Snell went out.

The detective followed, of course.

At first Snell did not seem to have any errand. He seemed to be walking for exercise.

But at last he stopped and looked in at a store window.

Rifles, revolvers and all sorts of things that hunters need were displayed there.

Snell went in, and Patsy, looking in at the window, saw him buy a revolver.

With this in his pocket, the strange man returned to Bronco Bill's and disappeared within.

That evening the detective loafed away most of the time in Bronco Bill's barroom, but he did not see Snell.

There was the ordinary crowd of idle working-men, and a few roughs who evidently came in from ranches at a distance, but there was no disorder, none of the men seemed to be crooks, and nothing happened to throw any light on Snell's business in Helena.

It was much the same the next day and evening.

Snell took a long walk, but spoke to no one on the way, and when he returned he apparently shut himself in the room he had hired.

He came into the barroom late during the evening, but it was only to have a drink, and go upstairs again at once.

"Who's the stranger, Bill?" asked one of the loafers.

"How should I know?" was the surly response. "A gent comes to my house an' takes a room an' pays for it like a gent. Why should I ask him if his father went to church reg'lar, or if he intends to start a faro bank?"

"Do you think he does mean to start a faro bank, Bill?"

"Aw, come off!" returned Bill, scornfully. "Can't you take a hint? I don't know the gent's business, and, if I did, I shouldn't shoot off my mouth about it."

Next day, Snell took several walks, but they were short ones. He always returned quickly to Bill's, and once Patsy heard him ask the landlord if anybody had inquired for him.

Nobody had, but it was clear that Snell's business, whatever it was, was coming to a head.

In the evening quite a number of men galloped through the streets on horseback.

They shouted and sang songs and made a good deal of a racket at every place they visited.

By the time they arrived at Bronco Bill's they were well loaded and noisier than ever.

"Paint the place red," yelled half-a-dozen of them, as they came stamping in.

Patsy was standing at the farther end of the bar talking with Bill, with whom he had picked up acquaintance.

Snell was seated at a table in the corner nearest the door.

"Everybody have a drink!" shouted the leader of the party, looking around the room.

All except Snell got up and went to the bar.

"Come on, stranger," yelled the leader.

Snell, seeing that he was spoken to, got up slowly and started toward the bar.

His face was pale, and it was evident to Patsy that he wished he were not there.

When he was half-way to the bar he turned suddenly and made for the stairway door.

He passed through quickly, closed the door behind him, and all in the room heard the click of the lock as he turned the key.

"Well, I'll be durned!" exclaimed the leader.

As he spoke he drew a revolver from his belt, and, with the quick motions of a Westerner, pointed it toward the door.

But he was not so quick as Patsy, who darted forward and knocked his arm up.

The revolver went off, but the bullet, instead of crashing through the door and thus endangering Snell's life, flew into the ceiling.

"Now then, gents," began Bronco Bill, who didn't want a disturbance in his place.

The leader was too mad to be stopped by talk.

Turning fiercely upon Patsy, he demanded:

"What the blazes do you mean, tenderfoot?"

"I was afraid you might hurt somebody," responded the detective, quietly; "then you'd be sorry."

"Sorry! me sorry!" roared the ruffian; "reckon you don't know who you're talking to. I'm Bloody Sam, of the Dead Hills, I am, and no man tells me what I shall or shan't do. I'll make you dance for your impudence, you measely tenderfoot!"

CHAPTER IV.

PATSY'S DANCING LESSON.

Bloody Sam, as he called himself, backed into the middle of the room as he spoke.

The other men in the crowd yelled with joy, and got together at the other end of the bar from Patsy, most of them.

A few stood almost behind their leader.

They were grinning at the fun they thought they were going to have with the tenderfoot.

Patsy thrust his hands in the side pockets of his coat, and watched, as if with curiosity.

He knew exactly what would happen, for he had met wild men from the Western hills before.

So, when Bloody Sam blazed at his feet, he did not stir.

The first bullet tore a hole in the floor, just in front of his right toe.

"Dance, you onery cuss! dance!" yelled Bloody Sam.

"I don't know how," replied Patsy.

"Jump, then, you idiot! jump into the air, durn ye! I'll teach ye!"

As he spoke, Bloody Sam fired again.

This time the bullet struck so close to the detective's foot that it jarred it.

But no harm was done, and Patsy never stirred.

He knew that the first shots would be aimed so as to scare him—not to hit.

After that, Bloody Sam might be angered into firing to kill.

"For God's sake, stranger," called Bronco Bill, "don't be a fool. Dance for the gentleman. It won't last long, and nobody will be hurt. Jump and let him have his fun."

Patsy himself saw by the savage glare in Bloody Sam's eyes that it would be jump or get hit at the next shot.

Quick as a flash, therefore, without moving from his place, and before Bloody Sam could cock his revolver again, Patsy drew one of his own barkers and fired.

Nobody in the room knew what he was about till they heard the bang! and saw the puff of smoke that rolled away from in front of the detective.

"I don't dance for anybody in Helena, see?" said Patsy, quietly.

"Wow! ouch! damn!" howled Bloody Sam, as his revolver flew from his hand.

Patsy's bullet had struck it on the butt.

It not only caused Bloody Sam to drop the weapon, but it numbed his fingers.

And the bullet did another thing.

Glancing from the place where it struck Sam's revolver, it flew across the room and hit another man on the cartridge belt, doing no harm, but startling that man fearfully.

For that matter, all the men were startled.

Some of them ran behind the bar and crouched down.

Half-a-dozen of those who had been in the place when the horsemen came, ran for the outside door.

Bloody Sam, cursing with rage and pain, reached for his other revolver.

He could bend his numbed fingers just enough to draw it from his belt, but he could not cock it.

While he was trying to do so, it dropped to the floor.

The fingers of his right hand would not hold it.

Patsy, knowing that he was disabled, was paying no attention to him.

He was sweeping his revolver carelessly around the room.

"It might go off," he remarked. "It's got a hair trigger. Look out!"

At that his weapon did go off.

One of the men was just getting the drop on him.

Patsy's shot did for him just what had been done for Bloody Sam.

It knocked the gun out of his hand and caused him to leap back, cursing with rage.

"If you gents enjoy dancing," said Patsy, coolly, "just recollect that I'm floor manager here. I'll tell you when it's your turn—yours, for instance."

With this he let drive at the feet of a man near the edge of the crowd.

The bullets splintered the floor at the man's toe.

He jumped for fair, and the detective laughed.

"It's more fun than I thought," he cried; "we'll try it again."

He made as if he would empty all his cartridges at the men's feet, but he had done enough.

All except Bloody Sam were making a wild scramble to get behind the bar, out of doors, underneath tables—any old place, so as to be out of range.

Sam had cooled down very suddenly.

"Hold on, stranger," he called; "we uns know when we're licked. You've done us brown, an' ef thar's anything in the house you want, call for it."

Patsy understood the man.

His tone and manner showed that he meant what he said.

He was rubbing his sore hand and kicking his revolvers so that they would lie where he could pick them up.

Of all the men there Sam was the only one who hadn't shown fear.

The detective immediately pocketed his weapon.

"All right, pard," he said, good-naturedly; "there is one thing in the house I want."

"Name it."

"I want every man jack of you to wet up. The drinks are on me, gents. Step lively."

For an instant nobody stirred.

They looked at him as if they could not believe their ears.

Those who had crouched behind the bar gradually began to poke their heads above it.

Naturally, Bloody Sam was the first to move.

Leaving his revolvers where they were on the floor, he strode to Patsy with his hand outstretched.

"Put it there, pard," he cried; "you're a white man an' no mistake. I see I don't need to 'pologize fer trying to hev some fun with yer."

"Not at all," replied Patsy, shaking the man's hand.

Sam winced, for the detective's grip hurt his sore fingers.

"Excuse me," said Patsy, letting go; "I didn't think."

Then both laughed, and at that sound the other men came crowding up.

"Whar'd you learn to shoot?" asked one.

"Say, are you a walking Gatling gun?" inquired another.

Patsy smiled at them.

"I never learned to shoot," he said. "I was born with a gun in my hand, and I used to practice at the flies on the wall before I could walk."

Everybody laughed at this.

Bronco Bill drew a long breath.

The shooting scrap had turned out pleasantly, with nobody the worse for it, and everybody thirsty.

Glasses rattled on the bar, and bottles passed.

"Here's how, pard," said Sam.

He drained his glass at one gulp, and set it down.

"But say," he added, "you'd oughter hev let us make the other cuss dance. Friend of yourn?"

"No. I saw that he was scared half to death, and I was afraid he might have a fit."

"Rot! he'd 'a' got over it. Jine us now, won't ye, pard, and rout him out?"

"We'll let you do the shootin'," said another, eagerly.

"Now, gents," began Bronco Bill, fearful that the rough crowd would break loose again.

He didn't know Patsy.

"Rout him out?" echoed the detective; "why! he's a mile from here by this time."

"Go on!"

"That's what he's doing. Bet your life on it."

"We might break down the door and see," somebody suggested.

Several of them began to move toward the door.

"Wait a minute," called Patsy.

He was smiling, and they stopped to hear what he had to say.

"I'd rather you wouldn't bother the fellow," he went on; "I tell you that straight, but if you're dead anxious to have some fun with him and want me to join, I'll take the chance of a tossup. What do you say?"

"It's a go!" cried Sam, taking a coin from his pocket. "Heads or tails, pard?"

"Is it a cent?" asked the detective.

"No—a dime."

"Just as good. Throw it up to the ceiling, and if it comes down what you call yourself, I'll join you."

Bloody Sam tossed up the coin.

"Tails!" he called.

It struck the ceiling with a ting, and began to fall.

The detective's revolver flashed, to the great surprise of all, for they were watching the coin.

Crack! bang! went the trusty barker twice in rapid order.

There was another ting at the further side of the room.

Sam went over there, and, after hunting a bit, picked up the dime.

He came back to the bar with it, his face fairly blue with wonder.

"Durned ef the stranger hain't won," he said; "the dime hain't got either a head or a tail."

He laid the coin on the bar, and everybody crowded around to look at it.

Patsy's first bullet had struck it on one side and his second on the other, for the coin was spinning in the air and luck was with him to the extent that both bullets did not hit the same side.

"Wall! ef that ain't the durnedest shootin' ever I seen!" said one of the men.

All agreed with him.

"It means," said Sam, gravely, "that we let the white-livered cuss upstairs alone. But you must come with us to the next joint, pardner."

"All right," replied Patsy, "lead on."

"An' you'll hev to make some galoot dance soon as we find one of the right kind."

"Go ahead. I'm agreed."

The whole mob charged for the door.

On the sidewalk they paused to decide which way to go.

The street was not well lighted, and, while they were talking, Patsy quickly slipped a beard to his face.

"We'll go to Danny Dineen's next," said Bloody Sam. "Come on, pard——"

He looked around.

"Where's the sharpshooter?" he asked.

Patsy pointed down the street.

"He just scooted that way," he said, in a disguised tone.

"Durned ef I don't believe he's tryin' to shake us!"

cried Bloody Sam; "come on, boys, let's catch up with him."

Off they went, yelling like mad, some jumping to their horses, others on foot.

When they had all disappeared around a corner, Patsy took off his beard and went back into Bronco Bill's.

Bill and his bartender were alone in the place.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Bill, "where'd you come from?"

"I thought I'd say good-night," responded Patsy, laughing.

"Didn't you go with that crowd?"

"You see."

"Wal, I don't see how you done it, but you done me and my house a good turn, pardner. Gee! I thought they'd shoot the whole outfit to pieces. Have something?"

"No, thank you. When they find that I've given them the shake, they may come back here, and if they find me, it won't be so easy to get rid of them again. Tell 'em you don't know where I went."

"All right, no more I do. Call again?"

"To-morrow."

The detective then went out and crossed the street to his lodging.

He sat at his window for more than an hour.

He saw the horsemen return after a time, heard them singing and shouting in Bronco Bill's, but he heard no more shooting, and he saw no more of Snell that night.

CHAPTER V.

CAUGHT IN THE HILLS.

Next morning, in a fresh disguise, Patsy went over to Bronco Bill's and saw Snell eating breakfast.

The detective felt relieved.

He had feared that the man might have been so frightened by the drunken horsemen as to light out.

Patsy had now been studying the man for several days.

"I can't make him out," he said to himself, "but I don't believe he's a regular crook."

The detective was inclined to think that Snell had been up to crooked work, but that he was new to it.

He went back to his lodging almost at once, and watched.

Snell came to the door of Bronco Bill's and stood there a moment, looking up and down the street.

"He wants to walk for exercise," thought the waiting detective, "but he doesn't dare to get far away, for he's expecting somebody. I won't bother to follow him."

So Snell that morning took his walks alone.

They were not long ones.

He was always back at Bronco Bill's within ten minutes from the time he started.

At length he went in and stayed there.

Patsy went across and looked in long enough to see that Snell had found an old book somewhere, and was reading it in the barroom.

It was almost noon when the man Snell had been expecting came.

The detective knew it before Snell did.

Watching from his window, he saw a man come rapidly up from the direction of the railroad.

He walked as if he knew where he was going, and he turned in at Bronco Bill's.

It was the stranger who had come so near to murdering Snell a short time before in New York city.

"Now we're getting down to business!" thought Patsy, with great satisfaction.

It had been a long wait, and he was a little tired of it.

Every day he had sent a telegram to Nick, saying, simply, "No change," or, "Nothing doing."

Meantime, he had received no word from his chief.

So he knew that there was nothing for him to do but stay there and watch.

Of course, he crossed over to the saloon soon after the stranger went in.

He was disguised so that neither knew him, and Bronco Bill did not suspect that the man who asked for a cigar was the one who had done the wonderful shooting the night before.

Snell and the stranger were eating dinner at a table in the corner.

They did no talking.

Patsy returned to his watching-place.

After dinner, the stranger went away alone.

The detective would have liked to follow, but it was his business to spot Snell.

So he stayed where he was.

Some three hours passed, and then the stranger returned.

He went into the saloon, and almost immediately came out again with Snell.

They walked away rapidly.

Patsy was after them.

Thinking that there might be some such excursion as this, the detective had bought a horse.

The animal was stabled a few doors from his lodging-house, where he could be got quickly, and he was kept saddled all the time.

But there was no use for him on this trip.

The men walked through the city, and they acted as if they were in a hurry, but they walked, and Patsy thought it better to follow them in the same way.

As long as they were in busy streets he had no difficulty in keeping close to them.

When they came to a long street, where the houses were scattered, he fell a little further behind.

And at last they were in the open country, with no house at all in sight ahead.

Then the detective had to be very cautious.

He decided to get into a field alongside the road, where he could dodge behind bushes.

It was well he took this precaution when he did.

He had hardly left the road when both men wheeled about suddenly.

They stood for a full minute, looking back toward the city.

There could be no doubt that some sudden fear of pursuit had made them turn.

Patsy stooped behind a low bush and waited.

At last they went on, but Snell turned frequently, and Patsy was kept on the dodge all the time.

This continued for two miles or more.

By then the road had brought them to hilly land, and the detective was thinking that his pursuit would be easier, when the two turned aside and began to climb a steep hill.

It was covered with trees, and there was no path.

Dead wood was on the ground everywhere.

A man's footsteps could be heard a long way, no matter how carefully he proceeded.

Therefore, it was not possible any longer to keep the men in sight.

Patsy took the chance of cutting across ahead of where the men seemed to be aiming for.

In this way he thought he might come to the top of the hill before they did.

Perhaps he succeeded. He could not tell, for, when he got to the hilltop, they were not to be seen.

He waited a bit, and listened for sound of their voices, or footsteps, but heard nothing.

The hill dipped steeply on the other side, and there were many hills beyond.

It was a very wild place, only partly wooded, and there seemed to be deep gullies in every direction.

"They didn't come out here for their health," thought Patsy. "It was to meet somebody."

"Probably that somebody is waiting in one of these gullies."

"Which one?"

"It's almost as good a place for hiding as a big city is."

After some little thought he went part way down the hill, then along the side until he came near the edge of a ravine.

While he was cautiously approaching the edge, he heard a laugh somewhere below him.

In the ravine, undoubtedly.

Then that was where the men had gone.

Patsy saw a rock a short distance away, from behind which he thought he might be able to look down into the ravine without being seen.

A few cautious steps and he was beside it.

Leaning far over it, he found that he had chosen the spot luckily; for a little way below him he saw a group of men, most of them roughly dressed.

Among them were Snell and his strange companion.

They were talking earnestly.

At that moment, Snell's companion was speaking, and the others were listening.

His words came faintly to Patsy's ears.

"I tell you," he said, "we're ready to pay the price, but you've got to deliver the goods. There's nothing unfair in that. We've come out here to tell you so, but you can't deliver the goods here, can you?"

"That'll be all right," said one of the rough men.

"Oh! will it? How do we know?" demanded Snell's companion. "We don't propose to put our feet into a trap."

At this some of the men laughed hoarsely.

"Supposin'," suggested one of them, "we don't let you get out of this gulch alive?"

Snell could be seen to start uncomfortably.

His companion was unmoved.

"In that case," he retorted, "you'd leave a couple of worthless stiffes here for the crows to pick. That's all."

"Do you mean that you havn't brought the stuff with you?"

"That's it, exactly."

"Then what the dev——"

"Why!" interrupted Snell's companion, "we're here to let you know that we're acting on the square. Prove that you're on the square, too, and we can do business."

The men looked at each other.

"Don't like it," grumbled one.

"Well," said another, the youngest in the party, "I think they've got the best of the argument. Here they are, just as they agreed to be. They haven't gone to any detectives, and it's our business now to hand over the goods——"

Patsy was greatly interested, wondering whether this young man would persuade the gang to his way of thinking, when, without the lest warning, strong hands were laid upon him.

He turned like a flash at the first touch.

His hand raised the revolver that he had been clutching from the moment when he lay down behind the rock.

But there was no use in firing it.

The bullet wouldn't have hit anybody.

His assailants had every advantage of him.

He had been caught by both feet and yanked backward.

Others had grabbed him by the arms.

Still another dropped a noose over his head and pulled it tight.

A little more strain on that rope, and the detective would have been choked to death.

In much less time than it takes to tell it, they had him with his hands securely bound behind his back.

The detective was helpless.

And up to this moment, nobody had said a word, and no sound of the capture had reached the ears of the men in the ravine.

CHAPTER VI.

PATSY IS FORCED TO SLEEP.

When they had him bound to their satisfaction, Patsy's captors laid him on his back and looked him over.

He saw, too late, how it had happened.

Close to the rock was a thick clump of bushes.

His judgment had been perfect, for it had taken

him to the exact spot where there was an easy way down to the gulch.

It was the way these men always took to get there.

But, unluckily for the detective, they had posted sentinels at that spot.

His captors had been within reach of him from the moment when he arrived.

Why they had not attacked him at once could only be guessed.

Probably they were so surprised that they didn't know what to do at first.

And maybe they thought he might be a prospector, or anybody but a detective, who would go away as soon as he had taken a look.

"Wal, by gosh!" muttered one who seemed to be the leader of the sentinels, "I reckon this'll make some difference with what they're jawin' about down thar."

Patsy tried a bluff.

"I'd like to know what you mean," he began, indignantly. "I haven't done anything to you——"

"And we won't do a thing to you," interrupted the leader, harshly—"oh, no! we won't tech ye! Pick him up, boys."

Two of the men took Patsy on their shoulders, and they went stumbling down the side of the gulch.

Snell and the others looked up in the greatest surprise when they heard the sentinels coming.

All the men got to their feet, for some had been sitting, and guns were shown freely.

"What the devil ye got thar?" demanded the chief of the gang.

"A spy," replied the leader of the sentinels.

"Find him up thar?"

"Yes—behind that rock. He crep' up jest as ef he knowed thar was suthin' to see below."

"Dod rot him!"

"Prob'ly," went on the sentinel, "he was put onto the thing by them galoots," and he pointed to Snell and his companion.

"That's it!" roared more than one, angrily.

"So this is what ye call bein' on the square, is it?" exclaimed the chief, turning to Snell's companion, fiercely. "Ye make a deal to meet us here alone to talk business, and give the tip to a pryin' detective, do ye? An' do ye think ye'll git outen it with hull skins? Wal, I don't think!"

The ruffians were growling angrily and watching their leader.

It needed only his say so to make every one of them empty their revolvers into Snell and his companion.

Snell was horribly frightened.

"I don't know anything about this," he stammered; "I give you my word of honor——"

"Rats!" interrupted the leader, scornfully, "what's your word of honor worth?"

"Plug 'em full of holes!" cried another.

The men raised their weapons, and it did look as if there would be a double murder on the spot.

"He's right!" said Patsy, quietly.

The leader turned swiftly toward him.

"What's that ye say? he demanded; "who's right?"

"The man who just spoke."

"Him?" pointing to Snell.

"Yes. I don't know who he is."

"And I s'pose ye don't know him, nuther," pointing to Snell's companion.

"I certainly don't."

It was plain enough that nobody believed the detective, but he breathed easier.

His interruption had gained time.

The men were not so likely now to shoot in a hurry and ask questions afterward.

Patsy had been set on the ground with his back to a rock.

Snell's companion was looking at him sharply.

It was to him the leader spoke next.

"I s'pose, Jim Leonard," he said, "thet you've got a word of honor to stack up thet ye never seen this man afore, eh?"

"He's a stranger to me," replied Leonard. "I never saw him before, and we took all the pains we could to keep from being followed. Snell's been in town three days without seeing anybody who was on his track. Why should anybody be on his track, anyway?"

"Why!" roared the leader, "to get us behind the bars, you fool! Ain't that reason enough?"

He turned again to the detective.

"P'r'aps you'll tell us how ye come here?" he said.

"Certainly," replied Patsy. "I saw these two men in town. It was plain enough that they had good business of some kind on. I took 'em for prospectors and thought they'd struck a good thing somewhere. It wasn't a straight thing to do, but I followed 'em to see what they'd got."

This was a story that it was very easy for the rough Westerners to believe.

Evidently they were struck by it, for they looked at each other doubtfully.

All except the leader.

He turned his eyes from Snell to his companion, and then to Patsy, and remarked, calmly:

"You lie—every one of ye."

Then he addressed his men.

"We won't go off at half-cock," said he; "these geezers hev done us dirt, but mebbe we'd better talk it over afore we do anything."

He spoke then to the sentinels.

"Stay here and use yer guns, ef any of 'em tries to scoot. We'll go further down the gulch and chin about it."

The sentinels nodded and the leader and the rest of his men went down the ravine until they were out of sight.

Now and then their voices could be heard as they argued, but what they said could not be told.

Once they sent a couple of men up to take Snell's companion, Jim Leonard, down to talk with him.

They sent him back after a half-hour, and continued their discussion until the sun was setting.

Then they all came slowly back to the spot where Patsy lay.

The young man who had been speaking when Patsy was captured, was talking with the leader.

"I'm sure it's the best way," he was saying.

"Wal, Harry," returned the leader, "you've got a sound nut on yer shoulders, an' you can talk better'n most of us, but I dunno. Howsomever, we'll try it. As you say, the main thing is to get the stuff."

"We certainly can't get the ransom, if we don't give 'em a chance to pay it," said Harry.

The leader nodded.

"After dark," he said, shortly.

It grew dark early in that deep ravine, but it was not till fully two hours had passed that the gang began to move.

In the meantime, they smoked and talked in low voices, or lay on the ground and snoozed.

At last the leader stood up and said:

"Bring 'em along."

Patsy had tried at first to see if he could free his hands. In the darkness he tried again, but it was of no use.

These fellows had known how to tie a knot, and they kept the noose around his neck, with a warning that they wouldn't mind leaving him there for crows to pick.

That was only too plain. They cared little for the detective. It was Snell and Leonard that they were interested in.

The gang returned to Helena in pairs mostly.

Two went beside Patsy, and one each with Snell and Leonard.

The rest trailed along—some in advance, some behind.

When they came to the edge of the town they scattered over different streets.

No one meeting any of them would have suspected that a score of men were coming into the city together.

Patsy's guides took the noose from around his neck then, and cautioned him that if he tried to break away they would shoot.

The caution wasn't necessary, for the detective had no idea of doing anything except stick to the gang until he had found out all about the business that had brought them together.

They came at length to a house in a quiet street.

Patsy's guides took him in there, opening the front door with a key, and led him to the kitchen.

The house was dark when they arrived, but it had gas, and this was lit.

Curtains were pulled down at the windows, and they waited in silence.

Others came in from time to time.

The last to arrive were Snell and Leonard, and the men who had been walking with them.

It was understood that they had been to Bronco Bill's, where Snell had hidden the "stuff."

When all were there, the leader said:

"Now, ef ye're ready fer business at last, let's git at it without any palaver."

"We're ready," responded Leonard.

"Prove it."

Leonard glanced at Snell, who slowly drew a wallet from his pocket, and took from it a number of one-thousand-dollar bills.

The eyes of the men in the gang flashed greedily. "I'd rather 'twas gold," muttered the leader, "but it looks straight enough."

"It's perfectly straight," said Snell, closing the wallet.

"Wal, but what are ye doin' now? You brought that stuff to hand over, didn't ye?"

"Certainly; when you deliver the goods."

It was Snell who responded, and his voice was calm now.

He seemed to feel that his victory was won.

Leonard, on the other hand, looked worried.

"Guess that's right enough, then," remarked the leader. "We've got the goods, an' we'll show thet we can meet ye. Harry——"

He interrupted himself suddenly, with a glance at Patsy.

"'Twon't do," he added, in a decided tone; "not jest yet. We don't want no witnesses to this perceedin'. I don't perfess to say, thet this geezer's a detective, but dead men tell no tales. I wisht we'd bored holes in him out thar in the hills."

"Better not do any shootin' here," suggested one of the men.

"Right; but thar's a good way, jest as quiet an' peaceable as a graveyard. Take him into the basement."

"Good God!" exclaimed Harry, "you wouldn't do that?"

"Wouldn't I? In course I would," replied the leader, harshly. "You go an' git the goods, Harry, an' mind yer own business. Two or three of ye gag that geezer and tie his feet. Then take him to the basement. Hear?"

They heard.

Patsy saw young Harry's face pale as he went slowly from the room.

Others proceeded promptly to obey the leader.

"I wonder if my time has really come at last?" thought the detective.

He could make no resistance, and tried none.

It was useless, too, to bluff the men or try to plead with them.

They stuffed his own handkerchief in his mouth and tied a cord tightly around his ankles.

Then they lifted him, while the rest of the gang and Snell and Leonard looked silently on, and took him from the room by a door that opened upon a stairway.

Down the stairs and along a short passage they carried the helpless detective, and at last laid him upon a cemented floor.

Not a ray of light was there.

The men stumbled in the darkness as if they were not familiar with the place.

"Say yer pra'rs, tenderfoot," remarked one of them, with a harsh chuckle, as he started away.

"He's got nerve," said another, noticing that no sound came from their victim's throat.

"More likely he's scared silly," returned the first. One of them was feeling along the wall.

"Hurry up," said the other.

"It's all right, I've found it," was the reply from a corner.

"Full on," said the first.

"So 'tis."

"Come on, then."

They went out.

Patsy heard the door close behind them.

Then their steps stumbling along the passage and upstairs.

At last he heard the opening and shutting of a door at the top.

The sound of the leader's rough voice came to him, evidently asking a question.

"Is the trick done?" or something of that sort.

He could imagine the men's short answer.

Then probably the gang got down to business again with Snell and Leonard.

It would do no good to try to tell what Patsy's thoughts and feelings were.

He had been unlucky enough before to get captured by men who meant to kill him.

On other occasions he had worked himself free, or Nick or Chick had come just in time to rescue him.

Nick was thousands of miles away.

Chick wasn't on this strange case at all.

The cords upon his hands and legs were very firm.

And yet the young man felt no despair.

"Somehow!" he thought, and he went to rubbing his back as well as he could against the hard cellar floor.

He thought he might wear the cords through in time.

In time—good Heaven! would there be time?

What was that he smelled?

An enemy more fearful than the bullets of assassins.

He understood now what had been doing when the man was feeling along the wall.

The villain had been hunting for the gas jet.

He had found it and turned the cock "full on!"

The close cellar was filling rapidly with the poisonous stuff.

Patsy's throat tickled.

He coughed and partly dislodged his gag, but it was only to take more gas into his lungs.

With all his might he wriggled so that the cord might be cut or worn enough to break.

He could make no effect on it, so far as he could tell.

Every strain simply made the cord cut deeper into his flesh, and he was as helpless as before.

The poisoned atmosphere choked him.

He felt his head whirling.

The whole house seemed to be going around and around.

In the confusion of his mind he seemed to hear voices in a loud discussion.

They ceased—there was no sound—except a fearful roaring as if he lay at the bottom of Niagara Falls.

And then, a dreadful feeling that he might as well give it all up.

A man had to die some time.

One time was probably as good as another.

He had done what Nick told him to as well as he knew how.

He hoped that Nick and Chick would somehow get at this gang.

Patsy was very tired and sleepy.

The whirling and the noises ceased. His brain was at rest.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MYSTERY OF GEORGE SNELL.

Nick Carter had said good-by to his bright young assistant at about half-past ten of an evening.

He gave little further thought to the case that night, for he knew that it was in good hands.

"I shall probably hear from the boy in the morning," he thought, as he went to bed.

No message came from Patsy in the morning, because the young man had been too much occupied in watching Snell and Leonard in the Jersey City station to send one.

But a message came from Dinsmore, that gave Nick a bit of a surprise.

It was as follows:

Important robbery just reported. Don't know if it is the one you referred to last night, but it is very important and mysterious. Wish you would come on.

Nick took the next train for the West.

Dinsmore's telegram was sent from Manchester, the capital of Wenonah, and there, of course, the detective went.

The journey was without incident, and was made as rapidly as possible, considering that there are no through trains between New York, and the distant Canadian town.

Dinsmore met him at the station.

"I've got a telegram for you," he said, as soon as they had shaken hands. "It was forwarded from New York, after you left."

Nick opened and read it. It was the one Patsy had sent from Chicago to say that he was going with Snell to Helena.

"All right," said Nick. "Now, what's the case?"

"It was reported by the lieutenant governor," replied Dinsmore, "Governor Bradley being away. His absence makes the thing very peculiar, and I don't understand it at all. How you should know in New York that a robbery had taken place in Manchester before anybody here suspected such a thing is quite a mystery."

"I believe," responded Nick, "that I begin to see how that happened. But go on. Some state papers have disappeared, eh?"

"That's it, and that's what makes me suppose it the same affair that you seemed to have in mind when you telegraphed from New York."

"Anything else?"

"Do you mean anything else stolen? Not that I am aware of, but the papers are very important. I thought you ought to come on, as you seemed to know something of the matter."

"I am afraid I don't, but I'm interested. You say there's been no abduction, or kidnaping?"

"I didn't say so, but I know of no such case."

"Well, tell me all you know about the loss of the papers."

"That's very little. The lieutenant governor called me up late on the night you telegraphed me. In fact, I think it was about two hours after I had sent my answer.

"Dinsmore," said he, 'there's been a very strange robbery, or something that looks very much like it. Some papers that cannot be of value to ordinary

thieves, but for which the government would pay a handsome reward, have disappeared.'

"I asked him when they were taken.

"I've no idea,' he answered. 'I only discovered the loss this afternoon.'

"Then I asked him why he had not called on me sooner.

"Because,' he replied, 'we've been hunting high and low for the papers. We supposed they must be somewhere in the government building. But we've looked everywhere. They're gone, and that's all there is to it.'

"I thought of your telegram, Nick, but said nothing. After I had asked the usual questions about where the papers were kept, and so forth, I inquired if he had any suspicions.

"The question seemed to make him uneasy.

"I cannot suspect anybody,' he replied.

"I remembered you, Nick, and I said:

"That means that you suspect everybody.'"

"What did he say to that?" asked Nick.

"Huh! he smiled in a queer way, and simply said: 'Well?' Of course, I pressed him to be frank with me, but didn't succeed at first.

"Finally, though, he let the cat out of the bag in a kind of roundabout way.

"I saw that he actually suspected Governor Bradley himself."

"Well!" exclaimed Nick, "that's rather interesting."

"Yes—and mysterious. I'll tell you a fact or two without stopping to say how I squeezed them from the lieutenant governor.

"Some six or seven weeks ago a man unknown here called on Governor Bradley. We know that his name was Leonard and that he and the governor had been in some sort of business deal together years before.

"That much is known, because a part of their conversation was accidentally overheard.

"Nobody thought anything of it at the time, of course, for it all seemed natural and straight enough.

"The lieutenant governor heard Leonard asking about some papers of some kind.

"They're safe,' Governor Bradley told him.

"That's all well enough for you to say,' Leonard responded, 'but I'd rather keep them myself. Then I'd know.'"

Dinsmore paused.

"Does anybody know what the governor said to that?" asked Nick.

"He was heard to say something to the effect that that would give Leonard the whip hand.

"The men were evidently on bad terms, and that is all that is known of that matter.

"Now, some time later—it is rather more than three weeks ago, Governor Bradley left town. He hasn't been back since."

"Is there anything strange in that?"

"Not exactly. He went away openly enough. Told everybody that he was tired and needed rest. That was natural. He also told the lieutenant governor secretly that he was going to travel without letting anybody know where he was.

"I don't want to be bothered with letters," he said."

"That was natural enough, too, wasn't it?"

"I suppose so; but just now the lieutenant governor is putting two and two together, and I can see that he is suspicious. He hasn't said so in so many words, you understand, but that's what he feels, just the same."

"You haven't told me all, Dinsmore."

"Not quite. Governor Bradley told a lieutenant governor that he would manage to be within reach at all times, but that his movements and address must be kept private.

"I will take the name of George Snell," said he, "and keep you informed where you may telegraph to me, if anything of real importance comes up."

"So for some days, the lieutenant governor received a telegram every day, saying, 'Snell, Auditorium, Chicago,' or 'Snell, Planter's, St. Louis,' and so forth.

"Then there was a break of a few days, after which came word that 'Snell' was at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, New York.

"Meantime, nothing had happened that the lieutenant governor couldn't attend to alone.

"Then came the discovery that papers were missing.

"As soon as it was certain that the papers had disappeared, the lieutenant governor telegraphed the fact to 'Snell,' and told him in the same message that the matter would be placed in my hands.

"If the lieutenant governor had thought twice, he would have called me up before wiring to Bradley, alias Snell, but he didn't think quick enough, and

since that time not a word has been heard from 'Snell.' And there you are."

"I see," said Nick; "it's very interesting. When does the next train go to Helena, Montana?"

"To Helena! There's no direct train to that point, in any case; but what the mischief do you want to go there for?"

"Because that's where Governor Bradley is, or where he went. I think, Dinsmore, that I shall have to hunt for your governor, as well as for the thieves who stole the papers. I hope I may find the governor alive."

"Good gracious! what——"

"Look up the trains, please. I want to catch the first that goes."

With a wondering face, Dinsmore studied a railway guide for a few minutes.

Part of their conversation had taken place on the street. Now they were in his office.

Presently, he looked at his watch.

"There's a train in half-an-hour," he said, "that will get you pretty well started, and you can probably make connections that will take you through so as to reach Helena in about thirty hours. Will that do?"

"How can I tell. I must take that train, and I think, Dinsmore, it would be as well if you should come along, too."

"I'll do it, gladly."

"Anything to do to get ready?"

"No."

"Let's start for the station, then."

They went out, and on the way Nick asked:

"Dinsmore, do you know anybody in Manchester whose name is Cecil West?"

"Slightly," replied Dinsmore. "Friend of yours?"

"No, I never saw him. What sort of a man is he?"

"Tip top, from all I hear. Not rich, you know, but honest and industrious. First-rate fellow, every way. By the way, he's in love with the governor's daughter, Estelle."

"So?"

"Yes, and the old man won't have him. He's sent the girl away, so as to keep them from meeting."

"The governor sent his daughter away, did he?"

"That's what I hear. She dropped out of sight after a big party at the governor's house some five weeks ago, and it is understood that she was packed

off to visit a distant aunt, or something, in the hope that she would forget young West."

"I wonder if West hears from her?" mused Nick.

"If he does, he doesn't say so."

"Of course not."

Nothing more was said on this subject, and Dinsmore did not suspect what was in the detective's mind.

Nick asked one other question about the case:

"I understand that nothing has been reported, except a theft of government papers. Is that right?"

"Yes, and I have wondered a little, for in your telegram to me you mentioned jewelry."

"I did. I heard some was taken."

"Nick," said Dinsmore, "who gave you the tip about all this?"

The detective looked his old friend in the eyes for a moment, and answered quietly:

"Governor Bradley."

"The deuce you say! Why didn't you jump on the case?"

"Because I didn't know till I arrived in Manchester that it was the governor who called on me. He said his name was Snell. I doubted it, but I had no suspicion as to whom he really was. I could see that he was holding some facts back, and that made me turn him down. That was where Bradley made a bad mistake."

The detective and Dinsmore made good connections, and arrived in Helena at six o'clock in the afternoon of the following day.

They began at once to trace the men they wanted to find.

Dinsmore made inquiries for a man answering the description of Governor Bradley.

Nick, knowing that Patsy must have come to Helena, hunted for some trace of him.

He had the more difficult task, for Patsy, of course, had been disguised when he arrived in the town, and, as Nick presumed, he changed his disguise almost daily.

Calculating from the telegram, Nick reckoned that Patsy must have reached Helena on a certain day and by a certain train.

He asked men employed at the station about the passengers who arrived on that day.

From one he got a tip as to a man who might be Patsy who left his grip at the station and walked away.

The grip was sent for later, the man said, and was taken to a street that he named.

Nick went to that street.

He walked the length of it twice.

There was no good hotel on it, but several boarding-houses, and any number of saloons.

Among others was Bronco Bill's.

Nick looked at it each time he passed.

It was not the first one he entered, but, after dropping in at two or three other places, he entered Bronco Bill's place just as the proprietor was telling a customer about a shooting scrap that had taken place there recently.

"They wanted to make the tenderfoot dance," said Bill, grinning, "but durn me ef he didn't make them dance and holler afore he got through with them. Such shootin' I never did see! I thought 'twould be the last of Bronco Bill's house, but the young stranger just brought them crazy galloots to their senses in no time. Say! he hit a dime——"

And Bill went on to tell the whole story.

"Patsy!" said Nick to himself, as he slowly put down a glass of beer at the other end of the bar. "I wonder how long it will take Dinsmore to follow his trail to this joint?"

Nick sat down to wait, and had supper meantime.

Shortly after nine o'clock, Dinsmore came in, looking sour and hopeless.

"Ah! there you are," said he. "I've been looking for you."

"Why didn't you come here, then?" asked Nick.

"Because I didn't expect to find you here. I seemed to trace a man who looked like the governor to this hole several times. Plenty said they'd seen such a man hanging around, but the governor wouldn't put up in such a place, not he!"

"It's where he put up, just the same," said Nick.

"Who told you?"

"I guessed it. My assistant has been here, and he wouldn't hang around in such a place, either, unless there was business in it. The business that brought Patsy here was——"

Nick did not finish.

Instead, he caught up a newspaper and held it in front of Dinsmore.

"Read it!" he whispered, "and don't show your face!"

Four men were coming in from the street.

One of them was the man whom Nick had known as George Snell.

As the detective was now disguised, he did not hesitate to show his face.

It looked, however, as if his disguise would have been unnecessary, for Snell walked quickly across the room and out by a door at the back.

One of the four went with him.

The other two stepped up to the bar and called for drinks.

Snell came back in a short time with the man who had gone out with him.

"Have something?" asked a man at the bar.

"No," replied Snell; "let's be going."

The four then went out at once.

"Great Scott!" whispered Dinsmore, "that was Governor Bradley's voice!"

"Of course it was," replied Nick. "Come on."

They kept on the track of the four men, and followed them to a house in a quiet street.

There was a light in the kitchen windows.

"Crooked work here," whispered Dinsmore.

"Sure!" replied Nick. "We must get a line on it, if possible."

They had not gone very near the house, presuming that there might be men on guard who would give warning to the others.

It seemed best to try to get at the kitchen windows from behind, and, accordingly they went around to another street, through a yard and over a fence.

This took some time, but the lights were still there, and all was quiet within.

Although the curtains were down they managed to get a glimpse inside through a small hole.

It was just enough to show a good many tough-looking men around a table, with Snell in the middle.

He was counting out a big roll of bills.

"Buying back the papers," whispered Nick, "and paying the ransom for his daughter."

"What! you don't mean——"

"Miss Bradley was kidnaped. That's what I mean. Ah! if the governor had had the sense to tell me the whole truth!"

Nick was thinking.

"There are a good many of them," whispered Dinsmore; "shall we go to headquarters for a squad of police?"

"No. They'll be through in a minute. We must make a bluff, and they'll think they're surrounded. You go to the front door, and I'll tackle them here."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RANSOM.

Harry had brought down what the leader of the gang called "the goods."

This was a parcel of papers done up in red tape.

It was laid on the kitchen table, and Snell began to count out the money that he had shown a few minutes before.

"I have forty thousand dollars here," he remarked.

"Ought to be twice that!" growled the leader.

"That was the price agreed on with Leonard, wasn't it?"

"Go ahead."

"You haven't produced the goods."

Snell, or, rather, Governor Bradley, stopped counting out the money, and looked straight at the leader.

"Plank down the money!" ordered the leader, harshly.

Just then there was a furious knocking at both the back and front doors.

Loud voices—there seemed to be a dozen of them—were crying:

"Surrender in the name of the law!"

"We're done!" gasped the leader, starting up, and lifting his revolver, "and by G——! I know who done it! You, Harry, you sneak, with your argument——"

"I haven't given you away," cried Harry, "I swear——"

He got no further, for the leader fired.

Harry groaned and staggered to the cellar door.

He grasped the handle to keep from falling.

It turned, the door opened, and he plunged headlong down the stairs.

All the other men were starting up in great confusion.

"Kill the governor!" they cried.

"No!" shouted the leader; "there'll be more in him than in anything else. Take him with us."

Then he added, in a lower tone:

"Side door, boys. Nobody seems to be there. They've forgotten the side door!"

He seized the governor as he spoke, and pushed him from the room.

Others helped, and both the governor and Leonard were hustled out.

All the things on the table—money and papers were swept off by somebody.

A door crashed in, and next instant Nick Carter leaped into the room.

He was greeted by a pistol shot from one of the ruffians.

It missed him.

Many voices were heard, calling, ordering, cursing.

Dinsmore rushed in from the front.

"Heaven!" he gasped, "the governor's voice! He's calling for help. After him, Nick and rescue him."

Together they made for the side door.

They overtook some of the gang there and Nick laid them flat with giant blows from his fists.

Then they went on.

Over a fence at a little distance a number of men were seen climbing.

A pistol shot from Nick dropped one.

The rest ran on.

Nick and Dinsmore dashed off in pursuit, their one hope being to rescue the governor, who had foolishly tried to do his own detective work.

* * * * *

Patsy felt as if his chest were made of strings, and rotten ones at that.

Every one of them had an ache, and there seemed to be millions of them.

He felt also as if a fearfully heavy blanket lay upon him.

Slowly, for he was less than half-awake, he put up his hands to brush the blanket away.

It was too heavy, and he wondered.

Then he opened his eyes.

It was rather a dark place, and a rough, unfinished ceiling overhead.

He saw that first, naturally, for he was lying on his back.

"Gee!" he muttered, beginning to remember, "I thought I was dead."

He looked down, raising his head a little, and saw with horror that what he thought was a heavy blanket was the dead body of a young man.

There was an open knife in the young man's hand.

"It's the fellow they called Harry!" said Patsy to himself, sitting up now and carefully lifting the body away. "What the mischief does it all mean?"

His memory was returning fast.

He recalled now how he had been carried down to this cellar to be suffocated with gas.

That was early last night.

It was now day, as he could tell from the light at one dusty window.

Besides, the cellar door was open, the one opening into the passage through which he had been taken.

His hands had been bound so hard that he could not loose them, and now they were free!

"How did that hap—"

He looked at the cord that had been around his wrists.

It was cut through.

Nothing could be clearer than that smooth mark of a sharp knife.

The detective looked at the knife in Harry's dead hand.

"That's it!" he said, softly. "The poor fellow tried to save me, and he came pretty near doing it."

He tried to take the knife from Harry's hand, but the stiffened fingers held it tight.

His own knife was in his pocket, and with that he cut the cord around his ankles.

Then he got up.

His head still swam, and he was weak, but his strength came back rapidly.

Going to the wall, he found the gas jet.

The cock had been turned square off.

"Harry did it," he whispered. "Poor fellow! I remember how he couldn't stand the idea of my being murdered. His coming in and leaving the door open ventilated the place, and so I didn't die of suffocation. Poor chap! he meant well. I wonder how he came to be shot?"

Shot he was, as the detective could see from the wound in the young man's breast.

Patsy stood still for a full minute.

"Hang me!" he exclaimed, "if it doesn't seem as wonderful as if I was dead!"

He felt for his revolver.

One had been taken away from him, but he had the other, and, with this in his hand, he went upstairs.

The house was very still.

In the kitchen he found overturned chairs and other signs of disorder.

"There was a ruction of some kind," he concluded.

He wasn't sure just what he ought to do, and decided that before he tried to form a plan he would explore the house.

Nothing attracted his attention in the rooms of the ground floor, and it was the same on the next floor.

They were ordinary rooms, furnished cheaply.

The detective looked into bureau drawers, not because he was expecting to find anything, but to see if there was any evidence that the house was regularly occupied.

There was none. All the drawers were empty.

Opening a door, he found himself at the foot of stairs to the attic.

"Might as well take it all in," he thought, and he started up.

The third step was loose, and came up when he put his foot on it.

At once he pulled the board away.

He saw something that made his eyes bulge.

A box had been made beneath the step, and, lying in it, were two packets of papers done up in red ribbon, and a great quantity of money in big bills.

He took out and counted twenty one-thousand-dollar bills, and twenty thousand more dollars in bills of five and one hundred.

"Whew!" he whistled, sitting down and looking at his find.

A sound startled him.

It came from above.

A faint, weak voice—a woman's, apparently.

It seemed to be calling for help.

Patsy stuffed the money in his pockets, and bounded up the attic stairs.

Under the unfinished loft on a couch of blankets he saw a young woman lying.

She was tied to the place so that she could turn over only with difficulty.

"Good gracious!" he cried, "who are you? What does this mean? Have you been hurt?"

"No," she answered, weakly, "but I am so weak and hungry. They haven't given me anything to eat or drink for more than a day. I suppose they have forgotten me. I am Estelle Bradley, sir. If you would only get word to my father! He is the

governor of Wenonah, and I know he would reward you!"

"Don't try to talk, Miss Bradley," interrupted Patsy.

He was stooping to cut the cords that bound her to the floor.

When this was done, he helped her to her feet and then downstairs. On the way, he took the papers he had seen in the box, and put them in his pockets.

She told him, when he explained that he was a detective, how she had been deceived by a message that was supposed to be sent by her lover, Cecil West.

"It was handed to me during a party at my father's house," she said, "and it told me that Cecil was lying dangerously wounded not far away. I went at once to see him, and was seized by rough men, who brought me here and have kept me ever since."

Patsy took her to a hotel, where they had breakfast.

Then, knowing nothing of Nick's journey to the West, he arranged for taking her home.

They started on a train that left Helena just as Nick and Dinsmore returned after a successful chase of the ruffians.

It had taken them most of the night, but they had rescued the governor and caught three of the gang.

Leonard had been shot through the heart by the leader when it came to the last fight out in the hills miles beyond Helena.

The governor confessed bitterly that he and Leonard had been engaged in a business that could not be called quite square years before.

"For my reputation," said the governor, "I had to keep certain papers, and Leonard wanted them, fearing that I would give them up some time, and so ruin him. We feared each other.

"So he hired a band of ruffians to steal the papers. They not only stole mine, but, without knowing it, a number of government documents also. Then, to make a complete job of it, they kidnaped my daughter.

"I dared not trust my secrets to the police, or to

NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

you, Mr. Carter. When Leonard found that the ruffians would not give up the papers without an immense ransom, that he was unable to pay, he told me what he had done. It was for the interest of both of us to keep the matter dark, and he thought he could drive a bargain with the thieves.

"So I got together all the cash I could and we tried it.

"We went from city to city, but whether Leonard saw the leader anywhere I do not know. At last I told him I should give the matter to Nick Carter.

"Leonard threatened to kill me if I did so. He nearly succeeded, as perhaps you know. At last, he said we should find that gang in Helena, and that by this time they would be willing to come to my terms—forty thousand dollars—their first bid having been for a hundred thousand.

"We came to Helena, Leonard taking a different route from Chicago, in order to give the word to the gang, who, he said, were mostly at the north.

"I came here and went, as he told me, to a low saloon, where I stayed till he came, and the rest you know."

"Not quite all," said Nick; "wasn't there a man on your track all this time?"

"Not that I know of, though yesterday a stranger was found spying on us. The gang killed him."

"How? When? Where?" demanded Nick, anxiously.

Governor Bradley told him about the way the stranger was put down cellar.

"And I was there," thought Nick, with deep sorrow, "perhaps in time to save him! I wish I had let the governor go."

They went to the house, and found it deserted by all, save the dead Harry.

What Nick saw, though, the open knife, the cut cords, convinced him that Patsy had made his escape.

But the case did not seem to be finished, for the valuable papers and the governor's daughter were

still missing, to say nothing of the great ransom that had been paid down.

So Nick went with the governor to Manchester, and there found Patsy, Miss Estelle, and all that the governor had been looking for.

It is supposed that one of the gang hid the papers and the money in the box under the stairs during the confusion of the attempt to escape.

"It was a clever move," said Nick, discussing it; "for the rascal must have known that some, if not all the gang, would be captured, and it would be foolish to have the stuff captured with them. So he took the chance of hiding it, meaning to go back some time, next day probably, and get it."

Governor Bradley offered to pay Nick and Patsy for their services.

"I don't think we want any pay," replied Nick. "We've had a good time out of it, and we weren't engaged on the matter at all. But I'd like to ask two favors."

"They shall be granted," said the governor.

"First, then, when you have detective work to do in the future, don't try to do it yourself."

"That's easy," laughed the governor; "you may be sure I shan't try that sort of thing again."

"The second," said Nick, "is that you consent to the marriage of your daughter and Cecil West. He's a fine young man——"

"I yield," interrupted Governor Bradley. "I will send for West at once."

He kept his word, and the young people were married not long afterward.

Nick and Patsy meant to return at once to New York, but they were detained in the West for a time longer by another case, which brought them against some of the gang they had just met.

THE END.

Next week's issue (No. 280) will contain: "Nick Carter Strikes Oil; or, Uncovering More Than a Murderer." Nick did strike oil. He uncovered a mysterious plot. One of the most important of his recent cases will be described in next week's issue.

FIFTY PRIZES

FIFTY PRIZES

There is a good chance for every boy in our new

Funny Story Contest

YOU ALL KNOW what rattling funny stories we printed in the contest that has just closed. It was a corking contest, and we are going to follow it with another of the same kind. You have just as good a chance in this contest as any other boy in America, whether you entered the other contest or not. We want

MORE FUNNY STORIES

Think of the funniest story of which you have ever heard, or the best joke. Write it out and send it to us—then look out for funny stories. We are going to publish in this contest some of the best side-splitters that ever came out of the joke factory. Remember the prizes we are offering. In this contest there are

FIFTY NEW PRIZES

FIVE FIRST PRIZES The five boys who send in the five best stories will each receive **TEN BOOKS** from this list. The list includes some of the best detective stories, tales of adventure, and most interesting boys' stories ever written.

TEN SECOND PRIZES The ten boys who send in the next best stories will each receive any **FOUR BOOKS** they may select in this list.

FIFTEEN THIRD PRIZES The fifteen boys who send us the next best stories will each receive any **THREE BOOKS** they may select in this list. The next twenty boys will receive any **TWO BOOKS** they may select in this list.

HERE ARE THE DIRECTIONS

This contest will close **SEPTEMBER 1st**. Remember, whether your story wins a prize or not, it stands a good chance of being published, together with your name.

To become a contestant for these prizes you must cut out the Prize Contest Coupon printed herewith, fill it out properly, and mail it to Nick Carter Weekly, care of Street & Smith, 238 William St., New York City, together with your story. No story will be considered that does not have this coupon accompanying it. Watch for the announcement of the prize winners in three weeks.

COUPON.

NICK CARTER WEEKLY PRIZE CONTEST No. 3.

Name.....

Street and Number.....

City or Town.....

State.....

Title of Story.....

- 1—The Boat Club.....By Oliver Optic
- 2—Cadet Kit Carey..By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry
- 3—All Aboard.....By Oliver Optic
- 4—Lieutenant Carey's Luck,
By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry
- 5—Now or Never.....By Oliver Optic
- 6—Captain Carey of the Gallant Seventh,
By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry
- 7—Chased Through Norway.....By James Otis
- 8—Kit Carey's Protege,
By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry
- 9—Try Again.....By Oliver Optic
- 10—Don Kirk, the Boy Cattle King,
By Gilbert Patten
- 11—From Tent to White House. (Boyhood and
Life of President McKinley.),
By Edward S. Ellis
- 12—Don Kirk's Mine.....By Gilbert Patten
- 13—Up the Ladder.....By Lieutenant Murray
- 14—The Young Colonists. A Story of Life and
War in Africa.....G. A. Henty
- 15—Midshipman Merrill,
By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry
- 16—The White King of Africa,
By William Murray Graydon
- 17—Ensign Merrill...By Lieut. Lionel Lounsberry
- 18—The Silver Ship.....By Leon Lewis
- 19—Jack Archer.....By G. A. Henty
- 33—Jud and Joe, Printers and Publishers,
By Gilbert Patten
- 34—The Adventures of Mr. Verdant Green,
By Cuthbert Bede. B. A.
- 35—In the Reign of Terror.....By G. A. Henty
- 36—In Barracks and Wigwam,
By William Murray Graydon
- 37—Commodore Junk...By George Manville Fenn
- 38—Gay Dashleigh's Academy Days
By Arthur Sewall
- 39—With Boer and Britisher in the Transvaal,
By William Murray Graydon
- 40—Canoes and Campfire..By St. George Rathbone
- 41—Check 2134.....By Edward S. Ellis
- 42—The Young Acrobat...By Horatio Alger, Jr.
- 43—In Southern Seas.....By Frank H. Converse
- 44—The Golden Magnet..By George Manville Fenn
- 45—Jack Wheeler; A Western Story,
By Capt. David Southwick
- 46—Poor and Proud.....By Oliver Optic
- 47—Eric Dane.....By Matthew White, Jr.
- 48—Luke Bennett's Hide-Out,
By Capt. C. B. Ashley, U. S. Scout
- 49—The Mystery of a Diamond,
By Frank H. Converse
- 50—Dean Dunham.....By Horatio Alger, Jr.
- 51—Tom Tracy.....By Arthur Lee Putnam
(Horatio Alger, Jr.)
- 52—From Farm Boy to Senator,
By Horatio Alger, Jr.
- 53—The Adventures of a New York Telegraph
Boy.....By Arthur Lee Putnam
(Horatio Alger, Jr.)
- 54—Joe Nichols; or, Difficulties Overcome,
By Alfred Oldfellow
- 55—A Voyage to the Gold Coast,
By Frank H. Converse
- 56—Nature's Young Noblemen,
By Brooks McCormick
- 57—The Gold of Flat Top Mountain,
By Frank H. Converse
- 22—The Champdoce Mystery..By Emile Gaboriau
- 24—The Detective's Dilemma..By Emile Gaboriau
- 25—The Detective's Triumph..By Emile Gaboriau
- 26—File No. 113.....By Emile Gaboriau
- 27—The Steel Necklace..By Fortune Du Boisgobey
- 28—Under His Thumb...By Donald J. McKenzie
- 29—The Clique of Gold.....By Emile Gaboriau
- 30—The Bag of Diamonds,
By George Manville Fenn
- 31—The Red Lottery Ticket,
By Fortune Du Boisgobey
- 32—A Mysterious Case.....By K. F. Hill
- 227—From Clew to Climax.....By Will N. Harben
- 225—Tracked by Fate.....By Fergus Hume
- 223—Found Dead.....By Hero Strong
- 221—Other People's Money...By Emile Gaboriau
- 219—A Hidden Clew..By Ernest De Lancey Pierson
- 217—Baron Trigault's Vengeance,
By Emile Gaboriau
- 216—The Count's Millions.....By Emile Gaboriau
- 214—The Missing Cashier,
By Ernest De Lancey Pierson
- 212—A Mystery Still.....By Fortune Du Boisgobey
- 210—An Excellent Knave.....By J. F. Molloy
- 208—The Condemned Door,
By Fortune Du Boisgobey
- 206—The Portland Place Mystery,
By Ernest De Lancey Pierson
- 204—Hunted Down,
By Richard Ashton Wainwright



Did you ever hear of laughing gas, boys? It's a kind of balloon juice they give to people who are blue, to make them laugh.

Anybody who reads these stories doesn't need it. He can't stop laughing, generally.

Keep up the good work, boys. You are starting this new contest in good shape.

A Bunch of Jokes.

(By Martin McNichols, III.)

A tourist going along a country road asked a porter how long the road ran.

"It does not run at all, to my knowledge," said the porter.

"Then I will make you run," said the tourist, and he proceeded to do so.

An Irish sergeant, who was leading a company of soldiers to the war, stopped at a fallen tree to give his followers some good advice.

"Fight, fight," he said, "like the very devil till your ammunition gives out, then run. I will start now, as I am a little lame."

A keeper of a menagerie show was visited one day by a friend.

"Did you see my antelope?" asked the keeper.

"No," said the visitor, "who did your aunt elope with?"

A Chicago Story.

(By Chas. Rozey, Mich.)

During a recent trial before Justice Dougherty it was thought important by counsel to determine the length of time that certain "two quarters of beef, two hogs and one sheep" remained in an express wagon in front of plaintiff's store before they were taken away by the defendant. The witness under examination was a German, whose knowledge of the English language was very limited, but he testified in a very plain, straightforward way to having weighed the meat, and to having afterward carried it out and put it in the aforesaid wagon.

Then the following ensued:

Counselloer E——: "State to the jury how long it was after you took the meat from the store and put into the wagon before you took it away."

Witness: "Now, I schoost can'd dell dot. I dinks 'bout dwelf veet. I not say nearer as dot."

Counsel: "You don't understand me. How long was

it from the time the meat left the store and was put into the wagon before it was taken away by the defendant?"

Witness: "Now, I know not what you ax dot vor. Der vagon he vos back ub mit de sidevalk und dot's schoost so long as it vos. You dell me how long der sidevalk vos. Den veet? Dwelf veet? Den I dells you how long it vas."

Counsel: "I don't want to find out how wide the sidewalks is, but I want to know" (speaking very slowly) "how—long—this—meat—was—in—the—wagon—before—it—was—taken—away?"

Witness: "Oh, dot! Vell, now, I not sold any meat so. I all time weigh him; never measured meat, not yet. But I dinks 'bout dree veet." (Here the spectators and his honor and the jury smiled). "I know not, shentlemens, how dis is. I dell you all I can, so good as I know."

Counsel: "Look here, I want to know how long it was before the meat was taken away after it was put into the wagon."

Witness (looking very knowingly at the counsel): "Now you try to get me in a scrape. Dot meat vos schoost so long in der vagon as he vos in der shop. Dot's all I told you. He don't get no longer in den dousan' year, not mooch."

Counsel: "That will do."

Jimmy Brown's Sister's Wedding.

(By John Dougherty, Me.)

Sue ought to have been married a long while ago. That's what everybody says who knows her. She has been engaged to Mr. Travers for three years, and has had to refuse lots of offers to go to the circus with other young men. I have wanted her to get married, so that I could go and live with her and Mr. Travers. When I think that if it hadn't been for a mistake I made she would have been married yesterday, I find it dreadfully hard to be resigned. But we ought always to be resigned to everything when we can't help it.

Before I go any further I must tell you about my printing press. It belonged to Tom McGinnis, but he got tired of it, and sold it to me real cheap. He was going to exchange it for a bicycle, a St. Bernard dog,

and twelve good books, but he finally let me have it for a dollar and a half.

It prints beautifully, and I have printed cards for ever so many people, and made five dollars and seventy cents already. I thought it would be nice to be able to print circus bills in case Tom and I should ever have another circus, so I sent to the city and bought some type more than an inch high and some beautiful yellow paper.

Last week it was finally agreed that Sue and Mr. Travers should be married without waiting any longer. You should have seen what a state of mind she and mother were in. They did nothing but buy new clothes and sew, and talk about the wedding all day long. Sue was determined to be married in church, and to have six bridesmaids and six bridegrooms, and flowers and music, and all sorts of things. The only thing that troubled her was making up her mind whom to invite. Mother wanted her to invite Mr. and Mrs. McFadden and the seven McFadden girls, but Sue said they had insulted her, and she couldn't bear the idea of asking the McFadden tribe.

Everybody agreed that old Mr. Wilkinson, who once came to a party at our house with one boot and one slipper, couldn't be invited; but it was decided that every one else that was on good terms with our family should have an invitation.

Sue counted up all the people she meant to invite, and there were nearly three hundred of them.

You would hardly believe it, but she told me that I must carry around all the invitations and deliver them myself. Of course, I couldn't do this without neglecting my studies, and losing time, which is always precious, so I thought of a plan which would save Sue the trouble of directing three hundred invitations and save me from wasting time in delivering them.

I got to work with my printing press and printed a dozen splendid big bills about the wedding. When they were printed I cut a lot of small pictures of animals and ladies riding on horses out of some old circus bills and pasted them on the wedding bills. They were perfectly gorgeous, and you could see them four or five rods off. When they were all done, I made some paste in a tin pail, and went out after dark and pasted them in good places all over the village.

The next afternoon father came into the house looking very stern and carrying one of the wedding bills in his hand. He handed it to Sue, and said:

"Susan, what does this mean? These bills are pasted all over the village, and there are crowds of people reading them."

Sue read the bill, and then she gave an awful shriek, and fainted away, and I hurried down to the post office to see if the mail had come in. This is what was on the wedding bills, and I am sure it was spelled all right:

Miss Susan Brown announces that she will marry

Mr. James Travers,

At the church next Thursday, at half-past seven, sharp.

All the Friends of the Family,

with the exception of

the McFadden tribe and old Mr. Wilkinson,
are invited.

Come early and bring

Lots of Flowers.

Now, what was there to find fault with in that? It

was printed beautifully, and every word was spelled right, with the exception of the name of the church, and I didn't put that in because I wasn't quite sure how to spell it. The bill saved Sue all the trouble of sending out invitations, and it said everything that anybody would want to know about the wedding. Any other girl but Sue would have been pleased, and would have thanked me for all my trouble, but she was as angry as if I had done something real bad. Mr. Travers was almost as angry as Sue, and it was the first time he was ever angry with me. I am afraid now that he won't let me ever come and live with him.

He hasn't said a word about my coming since the wedding bills were put up. As for the wedding, it has been put off, and Sue says she will go to New York to be married, for she would die if she were to have a wedding at home after that boy's dreadful conduct. What is worse, I am to be sent away to boarding-school, and all because I made a mistake in printing the wedding bills without first asking Sue how she would like to have them printed.

A Michigan Joke.

(By Robert J. Cross, Mich.)

MIKE O'BRIEN'S TWINS.

Mr. and Mrs. O'Brien were trying to find names for their twin babies, who, by the way, were girls.

It was decided that Mike, the father, should name them. After casting about and finding no names that exactly suited him, he decided to end the strain on his mind and named them Kate and Duplicate.

In the course of time another pair of twins came, and they were boys. It was now the husband's turn, and he wanted his wife to christen the boys.

Imagine his feeling when the mother told him one day she had named them Pete and Repeat. But when the third pair came the father grew frightened and named them Max and Climax.

Two From Ohio.

(By Wm. Green, Ohio.)

DOWNING A HEAVYWEIGHT.

A man left his umbrella in the stand in a hotel recently with a card bearing the following inscription attached to it:

"This umbrella belongs to a man who can deal a blow of 250 pounds weight. I shall be back in ten minutes."

On returning, he found in place of his umbrella a card thus inscribed:

"This card was left here by a man who can run twelve miles an hour. I shall not be back."

WHO BEAT?

"Where do germs come from?" asked the big man, who had occupied two chairs.

"Germany," chuckled the little fellow who was in the corner.

"And parasites?" from the big fellow.

"Paris," from the slim man from Maine.

"That's about the easiest."

"Microbes?" continued the big man.

There was a short period of silence, and then the patent medicine man chuckled: "Microbes, of course. I have it. Ireland!"

"Grippe?" from the big man.

"Hades!" wheezed the rank outsider who had his coat collar turned up and his feet against the register.

"Nothing like the ague," said the Indiana man. "When Indianapolis was first built they had to put quinine in the mortar to prevent the buildings from shaking down."

"Oh, you want to live in the Maumee Valley," said the bald-headed man. "I can remember when the ague was so bad that all the girls shook their beaux."

"That's right; and in the fall of the year, when the mist rose from the swamps, it used to shake the nuts off the trees."

When he had finished they all crossed the street to have the white-aproned attendant wash away their thirst.

A Live "Canthook."

(By Leslie Hoskins, Wisconsin.)

Patrick and Mr. Smith were hauling logs one day when Pat was dispatched to the barn for the canthook.

Now, Pat had never heard of a canthook before, and had no idea of what it was, but he thought he would have no trouble in finding one.

He was gone about half an hour, and Smith was going to see what had become of him, when he saw Pat coming up the hill leading a yearling heifer.

"What the h——l are you doing with that d——n calf, you fool?" shouted Smith. "Didn't I send you after the canthook?"

"Well," said Pat, "she is the only thing I could find that couldn't hook."

A Good Excuse.

(By E. Jurgemeyer, Ia.)

An Irish recruit in one of Her Majesty's riding schools had the misfortune to part company with his horse when the animal kicked. According to custom, the sergeant strode up to him and demanded:

"Did you receive orders to dismount?"

"Oi did, sor."

"Where from?"

"Frum hoindquarters, yer honner," said Pat, with a grin.

A Swim for a Loaf.

(By E. Peppern, New Hampshire.)

One day as the steamer came sailing up to the pier three green, hungry-looking individuals got off. Their names were Pat, Hans and Ikey.

Pat says to the rest of them:

"Begorra, I feel hungry."

Of course, they said the same. They walked along the wharf for a distance, and saw a loaf of bread in the water.

"We must have that," says Pat.

"All right," said the other two.

"I'll tell ye the way to get at it. Ikey, you get down first. That's right, and now, Hans, you get hold of Ikey's feet, and now I will get hold of your feet."

"Are you ready? Catch hold of it, Ikey, for I can't hold ye any longer. Hang onto him, Hans, while I spit on me honds."

And of course when Pat let go of Hans---- Well, you know the rest.

No Joque.

(By Robin W. Thompson, Can.)

A newspaper editor finding that the letters 'f' and 'k' were omitted in some typewritten copy wrote a letter of remonstrance to the author who had sent it. The offender replied as follows:

"Mr. Editor: Mistagues are liable to happen in the best ov regulated phamilies, and to typewriters as well. It is, indeed, a very unphortunate aphair, but the 'eph' and the 'cay' have got damaged. This morning I called at the orphice ov the gentleman phrom whom I bought this outphit, but I phailed to phind him in; in phact, the orphice boy says he will not return phor phour or phive days. I do not lique the loox ov this variety or spelling myselph, and consider this no joque, but a very serious aphair.

Phaithphully yours,

"J. L."

Long Ben.

(By Geo. Rothennell, Pa.)

Up in Vermont, there was an old man, a maple sugar boiler and shipper. He had three sons, one of whom was of an extraordinary height. This one was Benjamin, commonly called "Long Ben." He was not tall for his years as a boy, hence an explanation was necessary why Ben was so tall.

This was his father's explanation:

"I always made my sons take their turn at watching the sugar boil at night. Wall, one night (it was my son Ben's turn to watch) this remarkable thing happened: My son Ben was a lazy boy, and always went to sleep, instead of watching the sugar. Wall, this particular night the little chump stole about a dozen eggs from the hen house. It was his intention to slam the eggs into the lasses and after the eggs was boilt to eat them.

"Wall, the eggs was boilt, and he wuz about to eat them. He heard footsteps and not wantin' to be dis-kivered with the eggs, he got up and got right into one of them there lasses barrels. As I sed afore, Ben he wuz a lazy kid, and what do you think he did? Why, he fell asleep in thet there barrel. Wall, early in the mornin' one of the men, he heads up the barrels, then goes back to his nap.

"Wall, as mornin' come up, Ben woke up, too, and after seeing where he wuz, began to holler.

"Of course, nobody being around, nobody heard him. Ben, he looked out of the bung-hole and seed one of the colts grazing right near the barrel. Wall, he watches hiz chance, and when thet there colt comes past the barrel, Ben he sticks his han' out and grabs her tail. He wraps the tail around his wrist (a couple of times, so it won't come off, you know), and gives thet tail a jerk like the ould Harry.

"Wall, the colt she gits frightened and begins to go snorting up and down the place. All this time the barrel was being pulled along by the best colt we ever had. Wall, down the hill a ways there wuz two saplins, just about wide enough fur the colt to go through. Wall, this is what the colt did. The colt he goes to work and goes between those there saplins. The barrel was too large to get through, and thet there colt, dew you know what he does?"

"Why, he pulls Ben slam bang clear out of thet there bunghole."

Badly Mistaken.

(By Ernest Shorsett, Tex.)

A well-known citizen of New York, occupied a seat near the door of a crowded cable car when a masterful stout woman entered.

Having no newspaper behind which to hide, he was fixed and subjugated by her glittering eye. He rose and offered his place to her. Seating herself—without thanking him—she exclaimed in strident tones that reached to the farthest end of the car:

"Say, what do you want to stand up there for? Come here and sit on my lap."

"Madam," gasped the man, as his face became scarlet, "I—I fear I am not deserving of such an honor."

"What do you mean, you dude?" shrieked the woman; "you know very well I was speaking to my niece there behind you."

Speedily Spent.

Two young men of this city were talking in the post office corridor the other day and one of them said:

"Jack, I've sworn off smoking—sort of a New Year resolution, you know. I suppose you have taken some sort of a pledge haven't you?"

"No," replied his friend, "not one. I tried it last year and it failed."

"How was that?"

"Well, I have always been a sort of spendthrift, as you know, so last New Year's day I said to myself:

"'Jack, every one else is making some sort of a resolution, why not make one yourself?' So I resolved to save a little money for a rainy day. That afternoon I placed a ten-dollar note carefully away, and—the very next day it rained."

Pat's Ignorance.

(By George Rothernell, Pa.)

Two Irishmen had just landed, their names, Mike and Pat, respectively. After traveling around town for nearly twenty-four hours, they succeeded in finding a cheap boarding-house. The landlady of the boarding-house was in the habit of buying some new thing to eat, only on a Saturday. This week it happened to be pies.

Mike and Pat who had been eating hash for the last four days decided to change their diet that very night, and without the landlady's consent.

After the boarders and other occupants of the house had retired, Mike decided to slip downstairs and have

some pie. Mike did slip. He fell the length of the stairs, and ended his trip of gravitation by landing on the wash boiler.

The next thing that troubled the night air was the bellow of the landlady.

"Who is that?" screeched she.

"Mee-e-ow," was Mike's only reply.

This satisfied the landlady. Mike had some pie and retreated back to his bed, after stubbing his toe. The agility with which Mike got in bed caused Pat's equilibrium to be disturbed. Of course, Mike had to explain the reason of his absence. Mike added to his explanation:

"Pat, if youse run up against anyt'ing, remember youse is a cat."

Pat proceeded on his disastrous journey. It may be added that the only thing big about him were his feet. He fell over the clothes basket at the top of the stairs, but was saved from falling by the number of cubic inches his feet took up. He succeeded in reaching the pie floor without causing any anxiety in the front room. He reached the cupboard, and was in such readiness to have some pie that instead of picking up the plate on which the pie was situated, he grabbed the pie's circumference which was composed of crust. Of course, a fresh-baked pie could not stand this tremendous strain. The outcome of this mistake in geometrical sequence was that the plate was attracted by Pat's feet; the outcome of which was a hideous yell.

"Who's that," was bellowed again.

Pat was on the verge of telling her to mind her business when Mike's warning dawned on his top piece.

"Oi'm a cat," shouted Pat.

Up in a Balloon.

(By Chas. Cassel, Illinois.)

Uncle Si went to Chicago to see the sights. When he got there he went to the Masonic Temple. He wanted room and board. They asked him his name and he said:

"Benjamin Morgan, from Morgansville, Blaine County, N. Y."

So they gave him a room on the seventeenth story. He took the elevator and when he got nearly to the top he asked:

"When will the balloon stop?"

Not a Doctor.

(By Melvin E. Raymond, Mich.)

A traveling man once went into one of Chicago's restaurants to get a lunch. He was immediately addressed by one of the knights of the napkin who politely said:

"Sir, I have pig's feet, deviled kidneys and calves' brains."

The traveling man then replied:

"And what do you think I care what your ailments are? I came here to get something to eat."

\$1 worth of Tricks & Make-ups, sent postpaid for 25 cents stamps or silver. A nice Moustache or full Beard, Irish or Blde Whiskers, any color, bottle Spirit Gum to stick them on. Box of Liquid Cork to blacken up. Im. Rubber Mouth, big teeth, secret & apparatus for performing the great vanishing half-dollar trick. This big offer is to get your address to send my large Ills. cat'g of plays, wigs, tricks & agts. latest novelties. Mention paper you saw this in and I will also put in a Heavy GOLD plate flag: Ring FREE, send size. Address Chas. Marshall, Mfr., Lockport, N.Y.

Amateur Detective Work.

Boys, in reading one of the Nick Carter stories did you ever try to think ahead and guess who was the criminal in the case?

Each of the readers has a chance to find out how good a detective he is.

He has the facts of the case laid before him just as Nick Carter himself has.

Of course, he has not got Nick's experience or wonderful detective instinct. Still, he can prove whether or not he is a good detective by trying to decide in his own mind what the solution of the mystery is before he has read to the end of the story. The earlier in the story he is able to make his guess and the more accurate it is, the better detective he is.

We want to see what sort of detectives the readers of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY are.

We want one and all of you to write to us, telling us whether you were able to solve the mystery that Nick Carter had to solve before reading to the end of any of the stories.

Tell us how far you read before you arrived at your decision, and *just what points guided you in making your decision.* Your letters will be printed in this column.

Here are three good letters from amateur detectives all in connection with the same case:

Editor of Nick Carter Weekly—

Dear Sir: I have just finished this week's story, "Nick Carter and the Professor; or, Solving a Scientific Problem." I found it a hard problem to solve. I must confess that I was up a tree when I had about half finished the story.

How could I have suspected the professor? He was a respectable man, well-known and a friend and neighbor of the Hawleys. What possible motive could he have had?

However, when I read on I began to see. It takes Nick to unearth hidden things. As soon as he got to work in earnest I knew that some secrets were to be disclosed pretty quickly.

I can't help admiring the business-like way Nick has when he sets to work upon a case. The problems presented to him in that case seemed almost impossible to solve.

But there is hardly anything impossible to the greatest detective in the world.

Yours in admiration of the Carters.

Glen Ridge, N. J.

JAMES WENTWORTH.

You show good judgment in your opinion of Nick's ability, James. Try again at the detective work. You will find as you go along that you will do better with each attempt.

Here's a letter from Virginia:

Editor of Nick Carter—

Dear Sir: In reading the last Nick Carter story, No. 277, entitled, "Nick Carter and the Professor; or, Solving a Scientific Problem," I determined to try what I could do as an amateur detective.

The first few chapters left me mystified. What could be the solution? Slowly and carefully I read on, weighing each fact and circumstance stated in the story in my mind.

I proceeded with deliberation until I came to the place

where Nick was lassoed by the man in the automobile and dragged along the pavement.

There I paused.

"I'll see if I can't put two and two together," I said to myself, and I started in to try to do it.

The people who attacked Nick Carter must have had some object, I thought. What could be their object?

Nick was well known as a detective. Their object must have been to prevent him from bringing some criminals to justice. They must be the criminals themselves, or the friends or employees of the criminals.

That was the way I reasoned.

The fact that the assault occurred in front of the professor's house was suspicious.

Could the professor have any object in getting Nick out of the way?

As I found out later, my reasoning was correct.

Three cheers for Chick, Patsy, Nick and Ida. Three cheers for Street & Smith.

Yours with a cheer,

MILTON NOBLES.

Church Falls, Va.

Good boy, Milt. You've got a great head on your shoulders, with a good deal in it. Keep it up and let us hear from you again.

Here's another good one. This time it's from George Durham, of Scranton, Pa.:

Editor of Nick Carter—

Dear Sir: In reading the Nick Carter story entitled, "Nick Carter and the Professor; or, Solving a Scientific Problem," I was very much struck with the odd way in which the professor treated Nick when he visited him.

The man was evidently a crank, and a crank is always dangerous. There was evidently a screw loose somewhere about the professor's brain.

Then I saw that he might have an object in stealing the body to use on the dissecting table.

In this manner I solved the problem.

Yours truly,

Scranton, Pa.

GEORGE DURHAM.

NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

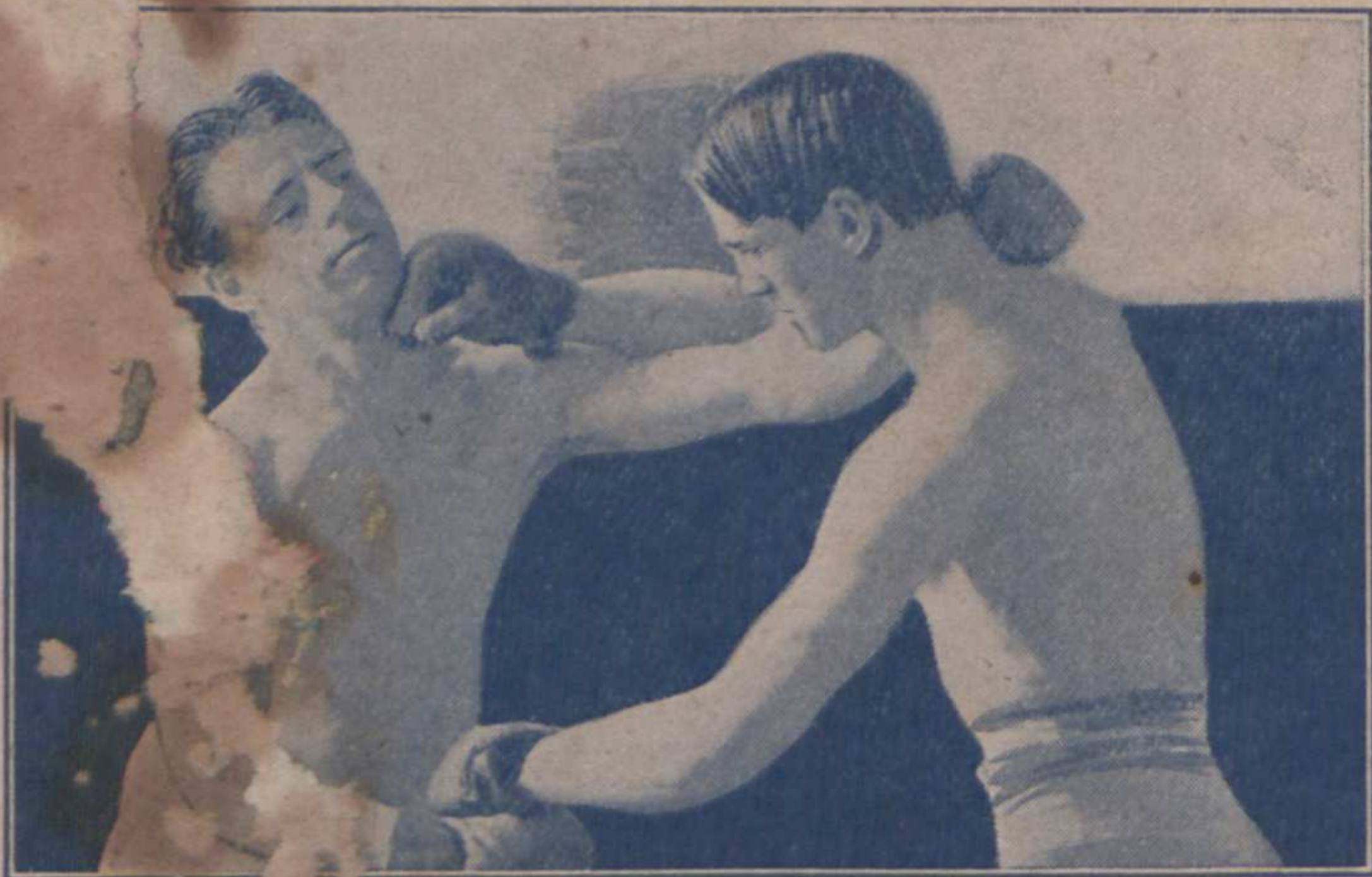
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